VILLAGE REMINISCENCES.

BY AN OLD MAID.

IN THREE VOLU

VOL. I.

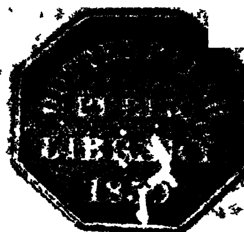
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VILLAGE REMINISCENCES.

INTRODUCTION.

"EVERY little village abounds in subjects of at least equal interest to the reflective mind, with the most populous city, or the most fashionable watering-place. The country churchyard, could it speak, would relate many an affecting story of blighted affection, of conjugal bereavement, of widowed parents mourning their last hope, of destitute orphans, of persons who in old age have died dependant upon that parish in which their forefathers held a respectable station; of the young, the good, the beautiful and happy,

swept off by the ruthless hand of death, in the midst of every enjoyment, whilst the old and bedridden have lingered on year after year, a burden to themselves and to others, until at length the lamp of life, which had long burnt with a feeble and flickering light, has sunk in the socket!

"The lordly castle which looks proudly over the river flowing so gently at its foot, could recount tales of lovelorn ladies and belted knights—of deeds of prowess done in feudal times, which to modern readers would sound so sanguinary, as to make their ears tingle and their blood run cold.

"The moated mansion, with its yew-trees cut into every fantastic variety of form, could whisper tales of murder—of blood-stained floors—of haunted chambers!

"Each woody glen has its little history of some happy or unhappy pair, who there first breathed the sound of love.

"Each murmuring brook its grassy bank, on

which some village Corydon has rested his weary limbs, whilst reflecting on the charms of her whom he has long, perhaps hopelessly, loved.

"The maypole which rears its head high above the sacred fane, boasts the beauty of its juvenile queen, for whom it might contest the palm with many a ducal hall.

"The country has its envyings—its heart-burnings—its jealousies—its scandal. It has likewise innocence, simplicity, purity, and sincerity.

"Virtue and vice are more equally disseminated through the world than on a transient view would appear to be the case. Formerly a large city was universally considered to contain more incitements to dissipation than the country. This inequality has been in a great degree removed; for the beer-house now supplies every hamlet with ample opportunity to vie with the town in idleness and intemperance; enabling vice and immorality to show themselves with

unblushing front, in defiance equally of the pastor and the magistrate."

Such were the reflections with which I closed a work of imagination, of which the principal events were drawn at a fashionable watering-place. I pursued this course of thought; my busy memory recalling various subjects of interest, with which I had become familiar during a residence of nearly half a century in this place, until, at length, I came to the determination of committing some of these events to paper, prefacing them with a brief sketch of my own very simple history. The result is as follows:

I am the only child of the late rector of Southend, who, descended from a junior branch of the Melcombe family, and united to a person of equally good connexions with himself, was early in life placed in possession of two excellent benefices. That on which he resided, until death deprived him of his amiable and beloved partner, was a family-living of considerable

value; and the house, having been erected by a former Lord Melcombe for one of his younger sons, resembled the mansion of a country gentleman of large property, rather than a parsonage.

At the period of my mother's death I was too young to be sensible of the magnitude of my loss, but my father, who loved her most tenderly, and mourned her deeply, feeling that all around reminded him incessantly of her whose loss he lamented, determined to remove to his smaller and distant living, and soon put this resolution in practice.

The change of scene, and the interest he took in the welfare of the much more populous parish to which he had removed, added to the amusement he derived from improving his house and grounds, diverted his grief, which, ere long, subsided into a calm cheerfulness of demeanour, which never again forsook him.

I still recollect the surprise I felt on our first arrival at Southend, at perceiving rooms of such small dimensions, compared with those to which

I had been accustomed at Melcombe; but in a few years all recollection of the place of my nativity was effaced from my infantine mind, and only partially restored by a visit I paid along with my father to the earl and countess some years afterwards.

At an early period of my own life I perceived that I was the principal delight and solace of that of my father, and I resolved that I would ever remain such. It may perhaps be imagined that I had few temptations to change my state. That, however, was not the case, for my face and person, although not decidedly handsome, were not without attraction; my education had every advantage that could be derived from an amiable and accomplished governess, added to that still greater one, of being under the constant superintendence of, and associating with, a person of my father's acknowledged worth, learning, and talent. And to these may be added, what was probably not the least of my attractions, the certainty of possessing a genteel

independence. But none who proposed to me had power to alter my determination to remain my father's companion, and when death deprived me of this beloved parent, I had attained an age in which prudence and inclination equally combined to urge pursuance of my plan of living single. I was at that period in my fortieth year, and though I have not been without suitors for my hand since that time, I have never had cause to repent my resolution.

In the early part of my life I was in the habit of visiting at Elmwood Park, the residence of a half-aunt of my mother's, who had kindly transferred part of the affection she had felt for the parent to her orphan child. My father, who always felt my absence a great privation to himself, kindly submitted to it, not only under the impression that I should derive great advantage from mixing in such society as Elmwood afforded, both in its amiable and highly accomplished mistress, and in those friends whom she frequently collected around

her, but likewise from knowing that such would have been the wish of his beloved wife, had she still lived.

I have many excellent friends, not merely in the vicinity of Southend, but even in the village itself; indeed I may almost claim a friendship with the whole parish; for there is not an individual in it who would not gladly perform any kind office for the daughter of their late revered rector.

There is rarely a cheerful meeting amongst those in my own class of society, in which a place is not reserved for the "Old Maid;" and when I return from the luxurious abodes of some of my wealthiest friends to my own quiet home, and in a winter's evening, with my window curtains drawn close, a fresh log of wood placed on my cheerful fire, and a book in my hand, I envy not those who, rich in children and in domains, probably regard with commiseration my lonely state, and simple mediocrity of fortune. I feel that few have less cause to

repine than I have, and I gratefully thank the Almighty for the blessings he has bestowed in enabling me, not only to enjoy so many comforts myself, but, to bestow food and raiment upon many of my fellow-creatures who are less fortunate than I am.

Ere I attempt a description of my neighbours, or recite any anecdotes respecting them, I will give a slight sketch of the village in which I reside. Soutnend is situated in the west of England, about one hundred and fifty miles from London. It is long and straggling, occupying, from one extremity to the other, nearly a mile in length, although it does not contain above sixty or seventy houses. It is placed principally upon the side of a hill, commencing at its foot (where the serpentine river of *** flows gently through the vale) and gradually rising for nearly half a mile, overlooking the richly wooded valley below. The upper part of the hill, which rises considerably above the village, is covered with underwood,

from which an occasional oak rears its lofty head, having been spared by its owner to embellish the view.

In truth it may be said that Southend is a pretty rural village, beautifully situated. An air of tranquil cheerfulness reigns around, which it is impossible for a stranger not to observe with pleasure. The houses are most of them separated from each other by little paddocks or gardens; whilst the china rose, the myrtle, the virginian creeper, the honeysuckle, the clematis, and the jessamine, mingle sweetly on their walls. And vines almost breaking under their weight of green and purple grapes (sometimes nearly overspreading the windows with their luxuriant foliage, at others allowing them to peep from between the branches) form an elegant covering to the rough and unornamental stone of which the cottages are built. At the extreme end of the village is the mill, the occupier of which is one of the richest inhabitants in the place. A little on the ascent is a row of

neatly-thatched cottages, wherein reside several of the labouring poor; ascending somewhat higher is farmer Dobson's comfortable house, and well-stocked rick-yard, promising abundance of food for the year; beyond this are a few pretty detached cottages, with their gay little flower gardens in front; next, the surgeon's substantial stone residence, with its nicely-mown grassplot, smooth gravel walk, and iron paling, claims attention; after which are the residences of the village tradesmen, and above all "the shop," which undertakes to sell, in a *little* way, every thing which a dozen shops in a town would engage to supply you with. Here is the village green, in the centre of which stands the maypole, that, from its elevated station, is the envy of the surrounding neighbourhood. On this green many a merry dance is held, and on a summer's evening as fine an assemblage of children may there be seen sporting in playful gambols, as ever greeted a traveller's eyes. The poor-house opens upon the green, contri-

buting by the neatness of its exterior, and the propriety which reigns throughout its interior, to give interest to the scene. About a hundred yards beyond is the church, with its pretty steeple almost covered by ivy; its quiet burial-ground, with its yew-trees of more than three centuries' growth, its cypress, and its weeping willows, kept sacred alike from pigs, poultry, and idle children. The shrubbery of the parsonage joins upon the churchyard, and within a short distance, on the opposite side of the road, my cottage stands, with its back towards the village, and facing the beautiful vale, towards which the parklike field in front gently slopes. Many of the trees planted there by my father are now in full beauty. My shrubbery, my little conservatory, into which my sitting-room opens, and my garden, can often boast more beautiful flowers than adorn the extensive domains of some of our greatest landed proprietors. My field affords grass for two cows and the ponies which draw my phaeton, thus adding

use to beauty. I am attached to Southend by many ties; here have passed forty-five years of my life, most of them in tranquil happiness, and, I trust, not altogether uselessly. All the villagers seemed to me, formerly, almost as forming one large family, of which my father was the head; and although that great connecting link has long been broken, I still feel nearly as deep regret at their misfortunes or misconduct, and as much pleasure at their prosperity and welfare, as if they were connected with me by some natural tie.

But to conclude my sketch of Southend. After passing my residence, the traveller will perceive an occasional farm-house, or a cottage of a somewhat superior description to most of those before observed, until arrived at the termination of our straggling village, when, should he chance to pursue the turnpike road, for a mile further, he will find himself at the entrance of Down Hall, the residence of an elderly gentleman, to whom the surrounding

property belongs; or on turning to the right after passing farmer Allgood's, he will soon arrive at the principal lodge belonging to Danby Park; but, as it is probable that I may narrate some anecdotes connected with both families, I shall not at present give any description of either residence, but now proceed to sketch the history of our present pastor.

THE RECTOR.

Mr. Bell's father was the only son of a deceased officer, from whom he had inherited little beyond a good name and a subaltern's commission. He married, whilst yet a lieutenant, the portionless daughter of a Scotch baronet, and found himself, at the age of thirty, the father of six children, who, with his wife and himself, had only his pay to support them. Shortly after the birth of his sixth child, the regiment to which Captain Bell was attached was ordered to the East Indies, to which place his wife and young family accompanied him; all of whom, with the exception of one fine boy, soon fell victims to the climate; the regiment

having been sent to the most unhealthy station in the country.

The same cause which deprived Captain Bell of his wife and children tended towards his rapid promotion; for, by the death of his senior officers, he was, in the course of a few years; promoted to the rank of lieutenant-colonel.

Immediately after the demise of Mrs. Bell, her bereaved husband had sent his only remaining child to England for education, in the hope of thus preserving one beloved memorial of her whom he sincerely mourned. As Colonel Bell had, at that time, not only the inclination but the power to pay liberally for his child's expenses, his wife's brother, Sir James Macdougall, readily undertook the charge of him; consequently, during many years he spent his vacations at the old and dismal-looking abode of the ancient family of Macdougall; Colonel Bell amply repaying his brother-in-law for the accommodation afforded to his son by costly presents to the lady of the mansion. Lady

Macdougall was the eldest daughter of a Scottish Laird: possessed of high blood, but little fortune; plain in person, violent in temper, and proud of a descent which she claimed from some of the oldest families in the country, she had artfully contrived to gain the hand of Sir James—at a period when he might have chosen amongst some of the fairest forms in Scotland—and, by so doing, established herself not only in the opinion of her husband, but in that of all who knew her, as a young lady of extraordinary talent. The frugality and good management of Lady Macdougall, were more than equivalent to a fortune ten times the amount of that she had brought as her marriage portion. She was bustling and active in her *ménage*, now scolding one lassie, now instructing another. She was to be seen every where—no one felt secure from her prying eye. If the ploughboy neglected his horses, he trembled lest the lady should visit the stables! If the dairymaid overslept herself, and on a summer's

morning was not milking the cows before four o'clock, she turned with looks of fear towards the little oldfashioned window at which her mistress was frequently stationed at that early hour. Sir James himself, although a magistrate, and a person of considerable county influence, appealed to his wife in all doubtful cases respecting magisterial or county business.

Sir James and Lady Macdougall had three sons and four daughters; of the former, the eldest was educated with young Bell at Edinburgh; the latter her ladyship undertook to educate herself; the consequence of which was that Elizabeth, the eldest, could, at the age of thirteen, read any chapter in the Bible without miscalling more than a dozen words; she had likewise completed a sampler on fine canvass, the curious devices of which excited the admiration of her younger sisters; and had made such progress in embroidery as to have undertaken a pastoral piece, similar to one which her mother had executed at school, in which the

shepherd was attired in a kind of oldfashioned courtsuit, and the shepherdess, as she reclined on a mossy bank, seemed more anxious to display her satin dress and hoop petticoat to advantage, than attend to the flock committed to her care. Such was the family in which during his vacation Edward Bell was domesticated for many years.

When the period arrived in which it was desirable that he should decide upon his future profession, life, with the entire approbation of his father, made his decision in favour of the church. He accordingly went to Oxford, where the eldest son of Sir James soon followed him. Colonel Bell chose that his son should not only be a gentleman commoner, but gave him an income far beyond his wants or wishes; whilst Sir James, the possessor of a large territory, though only a small rental, found it necessary to make his son a very limited allowance. When young Bell, who was generous almost to profusion, found that his cousin was debarred

of many advantages which he possessed, he insisted upon giving up part of his own very ample allowance to him, by which means James Macdougall's enjoyments were much increased.

At the period of Edward Bell's quitting Oxford, he received a letter from his father, informing him that he was then on his return to England, in consequence of ill health; his medical advisers being of opinion that his native air only could renovate his constitution. From any other cause than the one assigned, Edward would have been delighted to learn that he should soon see again that parent from whom he had so long been separated, and whose kindness to him in infancy, added to the grief he had expressed at their necessary separation, had made an everlasting impression upon his young mind; but he now only looked forward to their meeting with apprehension as to the result of his father's illness. When the period approached at which the vessel Colonel Bell embarked in might be expected to arrive, his

son set out to meet him. The ship did indeed reach the destined port, but the gallant officer who sailed in her had breathed his last sigh the day before she reached England.

Edward was deeply afflicted on receiving the melancholy intelligence of his father's death, although from having been separated from him at so early a period of life, he could not be supposed to suffer so long, or so acutely, as with his strong feelings, and warm affections, he would have done under other circumstances.

As soon after the remains of Colonel Bell were consigned to the tomb as his son could summon resolution for the task, he commenced the arrangement of his late father's affairs; when, to his equal surprise, and consternation, he perceived that there would not be above five hundred pounds remaining, after the payment of the funeral expenses, and his own college bills for the preceding term. From the style of his education, and the very liberal supply of pocket-money he had been in the habit of receiving,

he had never doubted that he should be very handsomely provided for; consequently his disappointment was, in the first instance, severe. Colonel Bell's improvidence had proceeded from a spirit of procrastination and indolence of habit, arising from a constitution enervated by a long residence in a hot climate, rather than from any other cause. He had always purposed ensuring his life for his son's advantage, but imprudently postponed it until too late; added to which, the same indolence which caused him to procrastinate what duty and affection equally urged him to do, made him leave his affairs to the management of those who took advantage of his confidence, so that at the time of his decease he was not only poorer than he ought to have been, but much poorer than he believed himself to be.

When Edward Bell found that he must depend entirely upon his own exertions for support, he hastened to consult his uncle on the plan it would be most advisable for him to

pursue, since another year must necessarily elapse ere he could take orders, and although fully qualified to undertake it, he feared it might be difficult to obtain the situation of tutor for the time that must intervene. Sir James, who had severely blamed his brother-in-law for supplying his son so liberally with money, notwithstanding himself and family had most materially benefited by it, now strongly inveighed against that imprudence which had caused Edward to be brought up with expectations so far beyond his fortune, agreed entirely with him as to the difficulty, almost impossibility, of obtaining pupils so soon as he might think desirable, and then proposed that he should remain at Glendougall, and, during his leisure, prepare his two younger sons for going to the college at Edinburgh. Edward readily acceded to his uncle's proposition, saying, that he should be most happy to do so, if Sir James was of opinion that his services would be equivalent to any trouble or expense that he might cause.

After the character given of Lady Macdougall it will not be doubted that this plan originated, as indeed did all others at Glendougall, in her ladyship; who, with Sir James, congratulated herself on having secured valuable instruction for her sons, at the very trifling inconvenience of having so moderate a person as her nephew to form a part of her family.

When Mr. Bell arrived at Glendougall, with the intention of making it his home for the ensuing twelve months, he found already domesticated there, a most agreeable addition to the family party, in a niece of her ladyship's, Kattie Macdonald. At the time Sir James had married the eldest daughter of the Laird of Durnfrew, there was another daughter, who, just springing into womanhood, was in every respect a contrast to her elder sister; she was pretty, gentle, sweet-tempered, and unaffected; but she wanted the prudence of Lady Macdougall; for, dancing with a young officer at a county ball, who was penniless as herself, she lost her heart, and

though he gave his in exchange, her father lent so unfavourable an ear to his proposal, that the lovers, believing their only prospect of a union was by an elopement, were clandestinely married. The laird, glad to get another daughter off his hands, made her marriage an excuse for depriving her of the very small pittance he should otherwise have given her; thus the young couple were without other means of support than what an ensign's commission afforded. On this very small income young M'acdonald and his pretty wife contrived not only to subsist, but to live very happily, although sometimes at a loss to know whence the following week's supply must be obtained. Their table was but frugally spread, and her dress was of the simplest kind, but love filled up every deficiency in their young minds.

Fortunately, ere they had an addition to their family, the regiment in which Mr. Macdonald was, was ordered abroad, thus his expenses were lessened, and his pay was increased. Mrs.

Macdonald gave birth to a fine girl on board the vessel which was taking the regiment to Gibraltar, where they remained for some years; after which they removed to various stations, Mrs. Macdonald and the young Kattie always accompanying her husband. Having only one child, they were enabled to give her the advantage of an excellent education.

Her husband having obtained a majority, and never having asked pecuniary aid of any one, Mrs. Macdonald had no difficulty in renewing a correspondence with her brother and sister, the present Laird of Durnfrew and Lady Macdougall, for her father had long been dead; which they were equally happy with herself in promoting, as she frequently sent them little elegancies of foreign manufacture, particularly her sister, whom she thought most likely to value them.

A few months prior to Mr. Bell's revisiting Glendougall, after the absence of a year, Major and Mrs. Macdonald were returning with their

regiment from Ireland, when a storm arising, the packet in which they had embarked was wrecked, and the passengers, with the exception of ten, one of whom was poor Kattie Macdonald, were lost.

The bereaved orphan was with difficulty saved by the exertions of a soldier, whose wife had been her nurse. When restored to a full sense of her situation, she could scarcely thank him who had saved her, since death appeared preferable to life, when thus cruelly deprived of her beloved parents. Kattie wrote to inform her aunt of the deplorable event, which had in a moment reduced her from happiness to misery, requesting her advice and protection; when her ladyship, with her usual excellent management, formed a plan which she did not doubt would draw upon her the applause of the world for her disinterested kindness, whilst, in reality, she would be amply repaid for the protection she meant to afford to the destitute orphan.

Kattie Macdonald, having arrived at Glen-

dougall in consequence of the invitation of her aunt, was required by her to undertake the instruction of four rude hoydenish cousins of various ages, from six to thirteen, who had been suffered to run wild about the house and park, without any education beyond such rudiments as could be obtained from the occasional lessons of their mother. The mild and gentle Kattie readily agreed to her aunt's proposition, glad to compensate in any way for her kindness in affording protection to her desolate state. She commenced her arduous task with alacrity, endeavouring by her sweet and amiable manner to attach her young cousins to herself; at the same time that, with a gentle hand, she strove to eradicate the weeds which, in some of her pupils, had grown up so luxuriantly as not only to overshadow, but nearly to destroy, every amiable propensity.

When Edward commenced his office of tutor to his cousins, he found Kattie Macdonald had been some months domesticated at Glendougall.

She took her meals with the family, but except at the hours of refreshment, was little seen by her uncle and aunt, though the latter was anxious that it should be supposed her niece had met with an unexceptionable home and most generous treatment; and, consequently, that from choice she remained in her own apartment, that she might devote more time to the exercise of her various accomplishments, preferring such a disposal of her time to the society of her friends. As Edward had no reason to doubt Lady Macdougall's word, he only regretted that so pleasing and apparently amiable a girl should seclude herself so entirely. He made no effort to prevent it, as he would have done, had he been aware that the room she occupied had formerly been the nursery, and was now appropriated to her use, and that of her pupils, without undergoing the slightest improvement; that the only window it contained was placed so high that nothing could be seen, except a passing cloud, or the

rooks as they flew in circles above the house, collecting after their day's excursion; whilst the accomplishments, which he was told she delighted in exercising, were confined to teaching her cousins to strum upon an old spinnet, which had been purchased for a daughter of the ancient house of Macdougall, nearly a century before! To use her pencil she found almost impossible, from want of light; but this she had little reason to regret, as Lady Macdougall had very soon informed her niece that after she had put her cousins' wardrobes in order, she would always find employment in repairing the family linen; and to prevent the possibility of her misunderstanding the wishes of her aunt upon this head, a huge basket of that article was constantly placed in the room for her to exercise her talents upon!

Miss Macdonald soon perceived that she had more than all the disadvantages, without any of the advantages usually attached to the situation of governess. She had been reared with

anxious solicitude, and accustomed to be treated with the most affectionate tenderness, by her fond parents, who had taken great delight in those accomplishments, in which they had been enabled to procure for her good instruction. She had a sweetly plaintive voice, and sung in a very pleasing manner the airs of her mother's native country. She played, with, what at that time was considered good execution, on the pianoforte, and she sketched prettily from nature. When to this we add that her features, though not strictly regular, were delicate and pleasing, her countenance intelligent, her person graceful, and manner peculiarly interesting, it will not be thought wonderful that her parents looked forward to her forming an advantageous connection in marriage. They thought not of the possibility of her being left an unprotected orphan at the most dangerous period of her life.

Edward was himself in the habit of either

mixing with the family, or strolling through the romantic woods, and over the bleak moors, which surrounded Glendougall, when the hours devoted to the instruction of his cousins were ended, as best suited his inclination.

Upon one occasion Lady Macdougall had attempted to interfere with the disposal of his time, when he stopped her by saying "Aunt, I am your guest;—whilst I am so, it is equally my pleasure as my duty to attend to the hours and regulations of your family. I have undertaken to instruct my cousins during the interval that must elapse ere I enter the sacred profession to which I am destined. I am happy in having an opportunity of being useful, and thus compensating for any expense which you may incur on account of my being with you; but when the hours of instruction are over, I consider myself at perfect liberty to dispose of my time as is most agreeable. If you approve of my acting thus, I shall be happy to remain a

Glendougall; when such a proceeding becomes unpleasant to you, I shall be equally ready to depart."

Lady Macdougall knew the interest of her family too well not to hasten to assure him that she never thought of interfering with the disposal of his time; adding, that she only meant to express a wish to have the pleasure of more of his company herself. From this period their relative positions were felt and understood by her ladyship, who thenceforth was careful upon all occasions to treat him as the nephew of her husband, and a gentleman.

On young Macdougall's return to his father's residence, after an absence of several months, Edward observed that the fair Kattie absented herself from the family circle still more than formerly; frequently excusing herself from appearing at tea, and rarely accompanying her cousins in their walks. The cause of this change he was not long in discovering; as, although James Macdougall seemed to wish to

avoid detection, Edward perceived such indications of his preference for Kattie, whenever his parents were not in the room, as at once gave a clue to the reason of her avoiding the society of the family as much as possible.

Mr. Macdougall had spent several weeks at his father's, immediately after his cousin's arrival in Scotland, but as Edward did not make Glendougall his residence until sometime afterwards, he had not before seen the two cousins together. From what he had seen and heard of Macdougall's conduct at Oxford, he had not formed a high opinion of his principles; and this evident anxiety on his part to avoid attracting the notice of his parents, made Edward fearful of his intentions towards Miss Macdonald, and determined him to watch his conduct.

Upon one occasion, when all the family were assembled together, with the exception of Kattie, he saw her pass the window at which he was seated, and proceed towards a little woody glen from which the house took its name. In a few

moments young Macdougall quitted the room, and was seen pursuing the same track; when Edward, being convinced from Miss Macdonald's manner, that her cousin's company would be far from agreeable to her, determined to follow him, which would, at any rate, prevent her suffering any annoyance beyond that of a few complimentary speeches.

From some mistake he did not at first pursue the same path which Miss Macdonald and Mr. Macdougall had taken; as, although the trees were then without leaves, the underwood was so thick that he could not discern them; but in a short time the gentle voice of Kattie, supplicating some one to desist, reached his ear, and, guided by the sounds, he soon arrived at the spot, where he found her struggling in the arms of James Macdougall. On seeing Edward approach, he instantly relinquished his hold, when his trembling victim flew rather than ran towards the house.

Edward then said " James, is it honourable

—is it gentlemanly—thus to pursue a defenceless woman with attentions, which, to say the least, seem bordering upon insult?"

"It is neither gentlemanly nor honourable in you, Mr. Bell, to interrupt me in the way you have done; and if you can find no better employment than that of being a spy upon my actions, I think the sooner you quit Glendougall the better!" replied the youth, who, trembling with rage, scarcely knew what he uttered.

"Were you master here, James, I would not remain another hour; but, whilst my uncle and aunt wish me to stay, and I can benefit your brothers, without injury to myself, I shall continue here."

So saying, Edward proceeded towards the house, Macdougall following in sullen silence.

When arrived there, they found the greatest confusion and disorder prevailing, since Kattie had rushed into the presence of Sir James and Lady Macdougall, demanding their protection from the insults of their son, who had dared to

make the most dishonourable proposals to her. From motives of delicacy their nephew retired to his apartment and, when Macdougall joined his father and mother, Kattie had likewise withdrawn. Sir James addressed his son on entering with unusual sternness in his manner.

"What is the meaning of this, sir; have you dared to insult your mother's niece whilst under the protection of my roof?"

"I give you my word, my dear father, that I was only striving to obtain a salute; I am sure you thought no harm of such a thing at my age."

"But Kattie tells a different story, Jemmie."

"Oh, she is a silly half English prude; the fact is, I would not have told you if I could have avoided it, but Kattie has set her heart upon being the future Lady Macdougall."

"The future Lady Macdougall!" screamed her ladyship, interrupting her son.

"Yes, my dear mother, such she has given me very plainly to understand is her wish, and

I as plainly told her that was impossible; and upon my afterwards offering her a kiss of friendship—nothing more, upon my honour—she began to call out, when Bell made his appearance, and she thought it necessary to make up a story for your ear, particularly as I had given her no hopes of becoming my wife."

"Your wife, indeed—make a pennyless girl your wife! Did ever any one hear of such presumption? She shall quit the house this very day—this very hour."

"Oh, no, mother, pray do not send my cousin away; for I assure you I am quite proof against her designs; besides, I shall leave Glendougall myself in a few weeks."

"Not an hour longer shall she remain under this roof—an artful wretch, to whom I have been so kind and generous!—What a home has she had here!"

"I quite agree with you, my dear, as to the propriety of sending your niece—that is, this young woman—away, but I should wish you

to fix upon some proper place for her to go to, and Jemmie can go away for a few days."

To this Lady Macdougall would not assent; but, after a little further conversation, agreed, as the day was far spent, to allow her to remain until the following morning. Nothing could exceed the delight of Mr. Macdougall at this arrangement; since, friendless as he knew Kattie to be, he thought that when turned out by his mother, she must be thrown entirely into his power.

Poor Kattie's surprise and consternation were unbounded, when told by her aunt that her arts were all exposed, and that she must look out for another home in which to practise them, as they were thrown away upon the heir of Glendougall.

For some time the astonished girl could not comprehend her ladyship's meaning, but, when at last she did so, her usually dove-like eyes and gentle demeanour changed at once into dignified resentment, and whilst she assured

Lady Macdougall of the utter falsehood of her son's accusation, she added, "Were he at this moment to offer me his hand, I should prefer the most abject penury to being united to so utterly despicable a character! I am ready, madam, to quit a house in which those whom, from relationship, I might have expected would protect me, only insult me; yet," she continued, tears rising to her eyes, and her voice trembling with emotion, "I am not ungrateful for your kindness in receiving me, and I must remember that it is natural you should believe my cousin rather than myself."

Lady Macdougall's anger was by no means softened by her niece's spirited reply; and, ordering her to be in readiness to quit the house at an early hour in the morning, she left the room.

Kattie no sooner felt herself alone than she gave way to the flood of grief by which she was oppressed.

To those who are blessed with friends and fortune, Kattie's residence at Glendougall must

appear so little desirable, that a removal from it will be looked upon as a very light grievance; but to one who was totally friendless, and whose whole stock of wealth did not exceed ten pounds, it was indeed fearful. Many as were the privations she endured, and few as were her pleasures, that of being useful to her young and boisterous cousins excepted, the conviction she had until now felt, that she was under the most eligible and honourable protection, had caused her to look upon Glendougall as a desirable home. She now shuddered at the prospect before her; thrown upon the world friendless—portionless, and her character injured by her cruel cousin, who would receive her? Her uncle, the present Laird of Durnfrew, she could not apply to for protection, as he not only had latterly kept up but little intercourse with Mrs. Macdonald, but since Kattie had been in Scotland, she had heard that he had for a long time suffered his housekeeper to usurp all the privileges of his wedded wife,

without really being such, in consequence of which Lady Macdougall and himself were not upon terms. Whilst such thoughts occupied the forlorn girl, in vain was every effort to gain repose, though, when the night was considerably advanced, she was so worn out by excess of weeping, that she sunk into a short and unquiet slumber.

At daybreak she arose, and busied herself in packing all which belonged to her. No sooner was this task finished than she wrote to her aunt, stating that after the command she had received, to quit the house at an early hour, she should not await a repetition of that order; but as she knew herself to be totally innocent of any design or wish to gain the affection of her cousin, or to form any engagement with him, she trusted he would have the honour to clear her from so unjust an aspersion, when she might hope for her ladyship's recommendation to some family, in which her talents might be serviceable, either as a governess or companion.

She then thanked her aunt for the protection she had hitherto afforded her, and ended in wishing every happiness to herself and family. Having concluded this letter, and placed it in the hands of the young woman who attended upon her cousins, she requested the latter might be told she wished to see them ere her departure; when Jeannie, with tears in her eyes, said her mistress had ordered the young ladies into her room, where they were to remain until Miss Macdonald had quitted the house. Kattie felt that this additional unkindness was not needed to hasten her removal, or to increase her sorrow. She wept as she thought that she should never again see those who had been her companions during many months, and the kind-hearted Jeannie, who had been attracted by her sweet and gentle manners, wept in sympathy. But Kattie, aware of the necessity for exertion, roused herself from this indulgence of her grief, and placing a trifle in Jeannie's hand, said, "Take this, my good girl, I wish it were in my

power to offer any thing more worthy your acceptance; I will thank you to take charge of these packages until I send for them."

Jeannie, taking the corner of her apron from her eyes, asked where Miss Macdonald was going, to which the latter replied, "I scarcely know—but I purpose endeavouring to find my way to the turnpike road, and there taking a seat in the first coach which passes."

When Jeannie answering that it was ten miles to the trunpike road, and that she would never be able to walk so far, added, if Miss Macdonald could put up with such a poor place as her father's house, until she could fix upon some lodging, she was sure that her mother would be proud to accommodate her; and being only three miles off, it would be an easy distance for her to walk. Kattie gratefully acceded to Jeannie's proposal; as any roof, however humble, that offered her a safe and honourable asylum, would be, in her present destitute condition, a desirable abode. Jeannie,

to whom the distance was no object, said she would step over in the evening, when her work was done, and see if she could do any thing for her; then calling the cowboy, with whom she was a great favorite, she directed him to shew Miss Macdonald the road, and, drawing him on one side, whispered a few words in his ear, which he was to repeat to her mother, and which she knew would ensure the young lady a kind reception.

The morning on which Miss Macdonald quitted the inhospitable mansion of her aunt was bright and cheering; and melancholy as were her prospects, she felt the reviving influence of the clear frosty air, which she inhaled during her walk.

On arriving at the little farm, and explaining to the *gude* wife who she was, and by whose invitation she had intruded upon her, she received a cordial though respectful welcome; and when the cowboy's message had been delivered, the attention of her humble hostess was

still further increased. Kattie was, in the course of a few hours, put in possession of a very small and meanly furnished, though clean apartment, in which blazed a bright turf fire; and as the window, instead of looking into the little farm-yard, as all the other windows did, had an extensive view of the surrounding country, without encountering any object more unseemly than a donkey which grazed immediately beneath it, she felt a momentary pleasure at the exchange, from the gloomy and prison-like room she had occupied whilst at Glendougall.

In the evening, according to her promise, Jeannie appeared, and by the account she gave her parents of her mistress's cruelty to the sweet young lady, added greatly to the commiseration they already felt for the destitute orphan. The following day a cart was sent for Kattie's packages, and the employment of arranging her small library, with her writing and drawing implements, afforded her some amuse-

ment. Her bed, as is usual in Scotch farm-houses, was enclosed by wooden shutters, and placed in a recess; her whitewashed walls she nearly covered with drawings, and though the floor could boast no carpet, two sheepskins bleached until they rivalled the driven snow, were placed for her feet; an oak table, so bright that it might have supplied the place of a mirror, had not an old-fashioned one of small size been above the chimneypiece, four beech chairs with rush seats, two delft china mugs, and two glasses, engraved with the names of Jeannie and Willie Macphane, for chimney ornaments, completed the furniture of her room. Mean as it was, it surpassed that of the apartment she had occupied at Glendougall; for there every thing was broken from having been used for the rising generation of the Macdougalls during so many years, and the walls which had not been papered or whitewashed for half a century exhibited sundry proofs of juvenile genius, in the form of rude drawings, and ill-

spelt couplets, which dirt had rendered nearly invisible! It was therefore no wonder that Kattie, as her eye wandered over the fine scenery with which she was surrounded, felt delighted at the change, and retired to rest with a lightness of heart which youth and innocence only could give, where she enjoyed a night of sweet repose.

Kattie had entered into an agreement with Mrs. Macphane for the hire of her small apartment; and as she could purchase milk, eggs, and oat-cake of her hostess, she thought she could thus live at a small expense, until her aunt's sense of justice or compassion should induce her to endeavour to obtain some situation for her.

The third day after Kattie's removal from Glendougall, Mr. Bell called upon her to offer any service in his power, assuring her that he should have done so the preceding day, had he been able to discover the place of her retreat. Kattie was much gratified by this mark of

respectful attention from him, since it convinced her that he did not credit what her cousin James had said to her prejudice, and her feelings had been so deeply wounded by the cruel treatment she had met with from her nearest relatives, that she more highly appreciated the kindness of one whose character stood high in the estimation of all who knew him. With great ingenuousness Kattie mentioned the slender state of her purse, and the plan she thought of pursuing, which met with his entire approbation, as he hoped with her, that in a short time Lady Macdougall would see the cruelty and injustice of her conduct towards her niece, and exert herself to gain some eligible situation for her, since her cousin's behaviour had made his father's house an improper residence.

When the business of the morning was at an end, Edward found himself turn daily towards the dwelling of the destitute orphan; his motives were purely those of goodwill and benevolence towards an amiable and friendless young

woman, and he reflected not that the little world of Glendougall might attribute his visits to a very different cause.

Kattie's residence could not long be kept a secret from her cousin James, who, having in vain importuned the worthy farmer's wife to admit him to her presence, hovered around the place in the hope of seeing her, consequently she was obliged to confine herself entirely to the house to avoid him; until Mr. Bell, perceiving her to look pale from want of air and exercise, prevailed upon her to go out with him for a short time each day, as, under his protection, Mr. Macdougall would not dare to address her.

At length the latter, finding every effort to prevail upon Mrs. Macphane to admit him unavailing, determined to force himself into Miss Macdonald's presence; where, notwithstanding the good woman of the house had followed him, he had the insolence, in plainer terms than before, to repeat the insulting proposal he had

already made. At this instant, while virtuous indignation caused her to express herself in such terms as for a moment to make him shrink beneath her reproaches, Edward Bell entered the room, when Macdougall looking at him fiercely, said, "I know why I am rejected; it is that my dainty cousin may lavish her fondness upon you."

Kattie, at this cruel insinuation, lost all self-command, and sinking into a chair, she covered her face with her hands and sobbed aloud.

Mr. Bell then said sternly, "Mr. Macdougall, we will, if you please, no longer annoy Miss Macdonald with our presence; my reply to your observations shall be made before my uncle and aunt, to whom I must request you to accompany me."

Without vouchsafing any reply beyond a look of sullen anger, James Macdougall quitted the farm, and in silence followed Edward towards Glendougall; but upon arriving at the entrance he turned hastily away, when his cousin, grasp-

ing him firmly, said, "I request you to accompany me;" and ere he could withdraw his arm he found himself taken almost forcibly into the presence of his father and mother, when Edward, addressing the former, said, "Sir James, I have more than once told you that I was quite certain of Miss Macdonald's entire innocence of the charge of forming designs upon your son; I sincerely wish it was in my power to say as much for him, with regard to her; but upon my calling this morning, I was told he had forced himself into Miss Macdonald's apartment, and on proceeding towards it, I heard him, unrestrained by the presence of Mrs. Macphane, make the most insulting proposals to her; and I heard her reply to him with all the indignation of insulted virtue. I saw him, as I entered, quail beneath her anger; I brought him here that I might explain before him what had passed, and give you an opportunity of doing justice to your niece, by thus exposing the person really in fault."

As Edward spoke, Sir James cast an angry glance upon his son, who, having recovered his usual audacity, said, "You were entirely mistaken, Bell; the fact is, you are in love with the girl yourself, and she, finding the higher game at which she aimed beyond her reach, now stoops to lower, and has contrived by her heroic airs on your entrance, to make you believe that which was mere *badinage* on my part, an insulting proposal. As I have before assured you, I care not a straw for the girl, she is much too mawkish and insipid for my taste. Upon my honour, sir, what I state is fact."

As James Macdougall concluded, he turned towards his father, who evidently doubted his assertions; but Lady Macdougall, taking her son's part said, she always considered Kattie an artful creature, and she thought that it was much better not to have any inmates in a family to interfere with its members, and make mischief amongst them.

As she spoke, she looked at Edward too

significantly to be misunderstood, when, with the colour rising to his cheeks, he replied, "If your ladyship intends to hint that my presence is no longer wished for, I can assure you that you have only anticipated my intention by a few seconds; I feel that it can no longer be desirable to any of us that I should remain here: since what I have stated myself to have seen and heard gains so little credence, it is quite necessary that I should quit Glendougall, therefore to-morrow I shall take my leave."

Lady Macdougall knew how greatly her younger sons had benefited during the few months they had had her nephew's instructions, and now felt displeased with herself for having offended him; but all her efforts to prevail upon him to remain were unavailing, and Sir James at last said, "I cannot blame you, Edward, for I am sure I should have done the same in your place:" but when he said this, his lady had quitted the room.

In the course of the day Edward called to

inquire after Kattie, and to bid her farewell; he found her still pale and agitated from the effects of her cousin's intrusion and insulting conduct. When he told her that he had come to take leave of her, prior to quitting Glen-dougall, her trembling lips refused to reply, and bursting into tears, she gave way to an apparently uncontrollable emotion.

Edward gazed upon her with eyes filled with tears, and, taking her hand, said, "You know not, my dear Miss Macdonald, how much I am grieved to see you still so overpowered by the agitation of this morning; but Macdougall will not annoy you long; he must quit home in a short time, and I trust, during that period, he will not again intrude upon you. A young man has it but little in his power to be of service in a case like yours, but be assured that I will leave no effort untried to gain you the protection of some eligible person, and though Lady Macdougall may not look out for a situation for you, should one offer I cannot think so indif-

ferently of her as to suppose she would prevent your getting it by her account of your conduct; since I am convinced she does not credit what her son says, although to avert the anger of his father, she affects to do so."

This was, as Mr. Bell knew it would be, most soothing to Kattie's feelings, and she was soon able to converse more calmly upon her prospects, and to thank him for his offers of assistance. At length it became necessary for him to say farewell, and rising with considerable emotion he took her hand and pressed it to his lips; but as he did so he felt it become deadly cold, and looking at the gentle girl, he beheld her with pallid lips and closed eyes, sinking from her chair. He caught her ere she fell, and holding her in one arm, whilst with the other he threw open the window to admit the air, he watched her with anxious solicitude, until in a few moments he had the satisfaction of perceiving her lips resume their colour, as with a deep convulsive sigh her sensibility returned.

Deeply blushing to find herself supported by Edward, she made an effort to withdraw from his arms: but he still held her there; and whilst he did so, he breathed in her ear words so sweet and soothing, as to make her almost wish that it were not necessary for her ever to withdraw from his protection.

Mr. Bell was not himself aware of the hold Miss Macdonald had gained over his affections, until he beheld how keenly she felt their approaching separation. He knew that he esteemed, pitied, and admired the sweetly interesting orphan; but he knew not that these feelings, when united in a disengaged heart, were almost sure to produce love. Had he been aware of it, he would have fled from her society, rather than have endeavoured to gain her affections; for poor as they both were, to marry under such circumstances he would have considered the height of imprudence. Now the truth burst suddenly upon him; he saw—he felt himself to be beloved; and at the same moment his eyes

were opened to the state of his own heart. Seeing her suffer thus at the idea of losing him, could he leave her without a friend to protect her, and exposed to the insulting addresses of an unprincipled young man? No—it might be imprudent to marry, but it would be cruel—unmanly—to leave her thus circumstanced, after being, as he then was, convinced of her affection for him. These thoughts passed rapidly through his mind, and at their termination he proposed to Kattie that she should unite her fate to his, when he would protect her from every danger.

Kattie, astonished, overwhelmed, and gratified, yet abashed, was unable to reply; but her disinterested lover saw in her varying countenance and downcast eye, that he had not miscalculated when he thought she loved him. Edward said, that circumstanced as he and Kattie were, it was desirable their union should take place without delay, as he could not remain at Glendougall, neither should he like to

quit it while she was at the farm. Kattie affected no undue reserve or repugnance; the man who had gained her pure and guileless heart, she believed to be the best and wisest of created beings; consequently, whatever he proposed must be right.

The next day saw Mr. Bell and Miss Macdonald united. The latter knew not, until long after, how much her husband had sacrificed for her sake; she recollected having heard that her father and mother had lived happily on an ensign's pay, and why should not they do so upon a curate's stipend? She was not aware that Mr. Bell had not been without his day-dreams of ambition. He was highly talented, and had obtained honours at his college; he had, since his father's death, devoted several hours daily to such studies as had enlarged his ideas, and improved his knowledge on every subject. He felt that he was equal to rising to the highest eminence in the sacred profession he was about to enter, and he had determined,

as soon as he had quitted his uncle, to endeavour to gain the situation of tutor in some eminent nobleman's family, as a step towards future preferment. Of his success he had no doubt, and he smiled at his own simplicity in having, in the first hours of his pecuniary mortification, been led to have any apprehension on the subject.

Such were the plans and ideas which his union with Kattie Macdonald overturned; he saw at that instant that all his hopes of eminence were at an end; that probably he might never emerge from the humble situation of a curate: but not for one moment did he waver between the happiness of her whom he loved, and the probability of gratified ambition. Could Kattie have been placed eligibly for a few years, their union might have been postponed, and he would have been enabled to follow the plan he had before marked out for himself; but poor and friendless as they both were, there was no other path to pursue than

the one which he had now proposed, and to which Kattie had acceded.

Mr. and Mrs. Bell proceeded to England immediately after their union, and taking lodgings in a retired village, lived with the greatest economy and privacy for some months, during which time Mr. Bell wrote to several of his college friends requesting their assistance in obtaining a curacy, that he might be enabled to take orders: in this he succeeded within six months after their marriage. The emolument was trifling, being only fifty pounds per annum; but a pretty little cottage was attached to it, with a field in which two cows might be kept, in addition to a small though productive garden.

Here Mr. and Mrs. Bell lived happily during five years. They had to submit to some privations: Mr. Bell would have enjoyed the occasional society of a literary or intellectual friend, and the means of extending his library, which was necessarily very limited. One piece of extravagance only had he been guilty of in fur-

nishing his residence: it was a pianoforte for his wife, as he could not bear the idea of her being totally without amusement, or that she should give up a very pleasing accomplishment. I have frequently heard Mr. and Mrs. Bell say that time never hung heavily on their hands, although their parish contained none with whom they could associate, beyond that kindly intercourse which ought ever to subsist between the pastor and his flock. Their garden, little dairy, books, and music, added to visiting the sick and poor, were a constant source of interest until the birth of a little girl, two years after their union, added to their employment and their happiness.

A short time prior to my father's death, accident put Sir Henry Danby in possession of the principal facts I have narrated, in consequence of which he formed so high an opinion of Mr. Bell as to offer him the living of Southend as soon as it became vacant.

Ten years have elapsed since that period,

during which time each revolving one has increased the esteem which I soon felt for the rector and his gentle wife. They are beloved and revered by all ranks of their parishioners. The neighbouring gentlemen, many of whom are men of considerable information and talent, always find pleasure in his society, and Mrs. Bell, by her sweet and amiable manners, is an acquisition wherever she appears; whilst their only child, Bessie, is lovely as her namesake (so celebrated in Scottish song and story) could ever have been.

Mr. Bell, on coming to Southend, immediately appropriated a third part of his income towards insuring a provision for his wife and child. The remainder is sufficient to provide them with all the comforts, and many of the elegancies of life; for, having been for several years accustomed to live on a very limited income, that which they now possess is, by comparison, affluence.

About five years ago, Mr. Bell received a letter

from Lady Macdougall (the first notice she had ever taken of himself or her niece from the time of their quitting Scotland, although he wrote to acquaint her with their union), in which she informed him that Sir James was dead, and that her eldest son, now Sir James, had treated herself and youngest daughter with the greatest inhumanity, having ordered them to quit the house, notwithstanding the pittance left them by her husband was not sufficient for their support; whilst her other two daughters were not, although married, sufficiently affluent to assist them, and her own health was so indifferent as to give her little hope of living long. Under these circumstances she trusted her nephew would not forget the kindness with which she had treated him and her niece, until her unworthy son had caused her to believe what she was now convinced was false, but would assist her in her present distress.

Unkindly and ungenerously as Lady Macdougall had behaved to Mr. and Mrs. Bell, the

appeal was not made in vain. She and her daughter received a most kind invitation to the rectory, at the same time that a remittance was enclosed to convey them there with every comfort. Miss Macdougall gratefully acknowledged her cousin's kindness, saying that her mother was too ill to write, and she feared would never be able to travel more; for that her constitution, which before seemed breaking, had quite sunk under the unkindness of her favourite child, who had never noticed her since her quitting Glendougall by his desire. Not long after this the tidings of Lady Macdougall's death were sent by the same hand. The event was stated in simple unaffected language, nothing was said to excite compassion for her own destitute situation. Mr. Bell immediately set out for Scotland, where he arrived in time to attend Lady Macdougall's funeral, at which Sir James and the gentlemen who had married his two eldest sisters were present.

As soon as the last rites were over, the gen-

tlemen appeared inclined to separate without even seeing again their young sister; but Mr. Bell called their attention to her forlorn state, and begged to know where she was to reside.

Sir James replied that he did not know, but at Glendougall it was quite impossible she should be an inmate.

The Lairds of Muckwham and Glo'ratem (as they were called from estates of about two hundred a year) said, "If you, Sir James, will pay us a trifle for your sister's board, as well as allow her something for clothes and pocket-money, she may live with us, turn and turn about; but we can do nothing otherwise, as six hundred pounds fortune was little enough for us to receive with the daughters of your father."

To this Sir James replied that he could not afford to do any thing of the kind, since he had his younger brothers to provide for; but he would, as he had gained something by his mother's death, allow Lucy thirty pounds a year, and if she married with his approbation, give

her, instead of that allowance, six hundred pounds for her portion (it afterwards appeared that he was bound to do so by his father's will); but not one sixpence more could he afford to allow her, since he was altering and improving Glendougall, the expense of which with the new furniture, would not be less than five thousand pounds.

Mr. Bell made no further effort to interest the brother or brothers-in-law of his young cousin, but stated that she should then accompany him to England, where Mrs. Bell, he was sure, would gladly receive her without remuneration, and endeavour to make her state of dependence easy. With pleasure the trio heard that they should have no further occasion to refuse an asylum to their orphan sister, and then proceeded to their different homes.

Lucy (who was the youngest of the four sisters who had been under Miss Macdonald's care) had then nearly attained her seventeenth year, and was what might be termed a bonnie

Scotch lassie—tall, plump, rosy, and good-humoured, with bright blue eyes and dimpled cheeks. Mrs. Bell received her with the greatest kindness; she has formed a part of the family ever since that period, and I am happy to perceive that by her good-humour and grateful attention to the wishes of her cousins, she has secured their sincere affection.

Lady Macdougall's third daughter did not live long after Miss Macdonald quitted them.

Sir James, as soon as Glendougall was in order to receive her, married Lady Jane Orford, the haughty and handsome, though portionless daughter of the late Earl of G——, who soon, by her extravagance, placed him in great pecuniary difficulties; when, finding that he had no longer the power to supply her wants, she treated him with the greatest contempt, and, if report says true, Sir James and herself live upon such unhappy terms together, as to make it unpleasant for the friends of either to visit at Glendougall: whilst the deranged state of his

affairs renders it impossible for them either to seek society elsewhere, or to separate with any chance of a tolerable maintenance for both. Thus they drag on life together in mutual dissatisfaction and irritation.

THE HEIRESS.

THE HEIRESS.

ELMWOOD, the residence of a half-aunt of my mother's, with whom many of my youthful days were past, was literally a baronial mansion, having long been the principal habitation of the ancient barons of that name. The title had, however, become extinct nearly a century before the period to which I allude, when Elmwood Hall, with the extensive domain to which it was attached, descended to a female branch of the family.

The house was of such dimensions as might be expected under those circumstances, and consequently contained many rooms that were rarely, if ever occupied; all of which, with the excep-

tion of one apartment, into which I recollected having once very unexpectedly followed the old housekeeper, were open to me during my frequent visits there. But as she earnestly entreated me not to mention having done so, it would most probably have escaped my remembrance altogether, had not a portrait of my aunt Elmwood, the extreme beauty of which attracted my childish admiration, retained a place in my memory which time had not power to efface.

In succeeding years I frequently attempted to prevail on Mrs. Jenkins to allow me again to look at that resemblance, which had made so deep an impression on my young mind; but to all my entreaties she remained inexorable, since she said my aunt had strictly forbidden any one, except herself, to enter this apartment. It is, I believe, not only natural to youth, but one of the failings of human nature, to attach a peculiar value to whatever is prohibited, more particularly if any degree of mystery be attending it: consequently this interdicted apartment be-

came to me an object of anxious curiosity, which caused me at length to venture upon asking my aunt's permission to see it. With a deep sigh, she replied that Jenkins might show it to me whenever I wished.

"Will you not accompany me yourself, dearest aunt?" said I.

"No," she replied, "I seldom enter that room—never but alone, and when I wish to commune with my own heart, and to indulge in a train of melancholy retrospection unsuited for companionship. At my earnest request, your father has kept you in ignorance of those particulars of my history which even at this distant period cast a frequent gloom over my spirits, apparently but ill suited to the numerous blessings I still possess, and for which I trust I am not ungrateful. But the time has now arrived when you may hear the narrative of my life not only with interest, but I trust with some advantage to yourself. Ask Jenkins to accompany you to what at your age was my boudoir—to show you the portraits

which are placed there, and you shall afterwards be fully informed of the events to which I have alluded."

Having obtained my aunt's permission, I did not delay making the necessary application to the housekeeper, to conduct me to this hitherto interdicted apartment, which was looked upon by the rest of the establishment with a kind of mysterious awe. We accordingly proceeded along a gallery of considerable extent, at the termination of which was the entrance to the room I wished to behold. On entering it, I was surprised to observe not only the extreme elegance of the furniture, but the value of the *bijouterie* by which it was decorated. It was lighted by a large bay-window, through which the sun shone, brilliantly illuminating with its rays the still bright gilding of the decorations. For a few moments the richness and elegance of the room, though fitted up in the fashion of other days, rivetted my attention. I was soon, however, recalled to the principal object of my

visit by Mrs. Jenkins, who said, "It is still very like my lady: is it not, Miss Mary?" I then turned towards the object on which her eyes were fixed, and perceived the portrait of a female apparently seventeen or eighteen years of age.

Never had I beheld any thing so transcendently, so bewitchingly beautiful. So well had the artist performed his part, that I could scarcely believe the figure was not in the act of starting from the canvass. The eyes, in which modesty and gentleness seemed blended with a peculiar archness of expression—the finely-formed nose and intellectual forehead—the pouting lips, parting as if in the act of speech—the light and symmetrical figure, with one hand upraised, and pointing to some distant object, seemed as if too aërial to be formed of mortal clay, and altogether formed a combination of enchantment. I stood absorbed in admiration during several minutes, and then exclaimed, "It does, indeed, still strongly resemble my beloved aunt; though I can scarcely imagine that arch and lively countenance, that

sylph-like air and person, could ever have belonged to one whose appearance is now so dignified and commanding."

"Ah, my dear young lady;" replied Jenkins, shaking her head, which had grown gray in the service of her mistress, with mournful significance, "you little know the changes that age and sorrow make in us all. I remember the time when it made the heart of all that saw her joyous smile rejoice; but after that came sorrow and affliction, and we almost forgot what joy was. I have played with my mistress when she was a child (for I was born on the estate, and was brought to this house by your great-grandmother when I was only twelve years of age); I have lived with her ever since that time; I have rejoiced in her happiness—wept in her distress; and now my angel mistress and I seem quietly sinking into the grave together, and few but ourselves think of what once made all so sad."

"I have frequently heard allusions to the severe afflictions my aunt has suffered in early

life, but never heard the nature of them. You, of course, know every circumstance attending them," said I.

"I do indeed; but it would ill become me to tell you that which my good mistress has thought proper to conceal."

I felt abashed by Mrs. Jenkins's rebuke, and instantly turned towards a portrait I had not before observed. It was the likeness of a gentleman in the first vigour of manhood. His fine face was still mantling with the bloom of youth, his full black eyes appearing to shoot through their deeply-fringed lashes glances of intelligence. The features were strikingly handsome, and the expression of his countenance was strongly characterized by sense combined with deep feeling; whilst a joyous gleam seemed spread over every feature.

"How very handsome!" exclaimed I; "what a noble creature!"

"He was indeed handsome," replied Mrs. Jenkins, sighing; "poor young gentleman, how

happy he was when that picture was taken; and how happy my mistress was, and how happy we all were; and how near the wedding seemed! Alas! alas! to think how soon all our mirth and joy were at an end!"

Much as the old housekeeper had raised my curiosity, I felt the impropriety of leading her to an explanation of what she had said, when her own judgment urged her to silence, although for a moment the recollection of former days had overcome her prudence. I now began my inspection of the ornamental part of the furniture and *bijouterie* in this elegant apartment. An Indian cabinet of exquisite workmanship attracted my attention.

"That," said Mrs. Jenkins, "used to contain all my mistress's letters and papers."

"And this ivory work-box?—how beautiful is its carving!"

"That was a present from the Major"——

"What Major?" I was on the point of asking, when recollecting that I had determined to *ask*

no questions that I thought might lead to my aunt's early history, I checked myself; whilst Jenkins proceeded, as if lost in thought, "Alas! little did we think when this beautiful furniture came from London, and when all the elegant presents were set out here against the wedding took place, that all would so soon be at an end."

I seated myself at the window, the view from which, although not extensive, was one of peculiar beauty. "Oh," I inwardly exclaimed, "if a being so exemplary, so lovely, so near perfection, with all the advantages of high birth and great wealth, has been unhappy, who dare expect happiness in this world? If such a highly-gifted creature as my aunt has been doomed to disappointment, how can one who is comparatively so little deserving as myself, venture to look forward to a different fate?"

I remained with my tearful eyes fixed with a vacant look upon the fine country before me,

lost in painful reveries, until Mrs. Jenkins said, "The evening is cold, Miss Mary, and this room, from not being used, is not warm, though I daily open the windows and dust every thing in it; for no one enters this apartment but myself, and occasionally my lady."

I arose at this hint, and retired to my own room, to compose my thoughts and looks before I joined my aunt. When I did so, she fixed her sweet but penetrating eyes upon my face, saying, "Well, Mary, has what you have seen been any gratification to you? That room was, when I was your age, my favourite apartment. I have spent many, many happy hours in it; but, as I before told you, I now only enter it when I wish to indulge in those melancholy retrospections, which will at times sadden the otherwise calm evening of my life, but like those fleecy clouds, which on a summer evening move so rapidly along, they disappear, and leave me serene and tranquil, thankful for the blessings I still enjoy, and looking for-

ward with hope and faith towards a blessed reunion with those who were so soon taken from me."

My aunt's voice faltered as she spoke, and her eyes filled with tears. My spirits were before affected, and unable longer to refrain from weeping, I gave way to the impulse of my heart, and throwing my arms around her, said, in almost inarticulate words, "Dearest aunt, why were you, who are so good, so faultless, made to suffer so severely?"

She soothed my agitation, kissed the tears gently from my cheeks, and then telling me, since I had arrived at that age in which she always intended I should be informed of those events, which had caused her so much misery in the early part of her life, she should put her intention in practice without further delay. "You shall," she continued, "peruse a narrative written by myself at various times—in days of happiness, and in those of acute suffering—when I believed that the grave

would soon bury me and my sorrows in its bosom. I have lived to look back upon those scenes with astonishment, that I was enabled to bear up through such severe dispensations, but with gratitude to the all-wise Disposer of human events, for the preservation he has vouchsafed towards me. There was a period when I looked forward to the hour of my death, as the only release from the accumulation of woe, by which I was surrounded. In the belief that all prospect of happiness in this world was shut out from me, I hoped that I might soon cease to exist; I have been spared to feel that time may heal the deepest wounds which sorrow can inflict, and that although the remembrance can never be obliterated, a well-regulated mind will still find its own happiness, in contributing to that of others. To-morrow you shall have the manuscript of which I speak; I cannot read it to you myself."

On the following day my aunt placed a

packet of papers in my hands, immediately after which she left the room. On opening the packet, I found written on the envelope, the few lines annexed: "I commenced the following narrative of my life at a period when I expected to have little to communicate, beyond what may be supposed to occur to a young woman circumstanced as I was. I commenced it as a frolic in the gaiety of youth; I continued it as an alleviation of my sorrows, when in affliction; I have concluded it when sinking gently into the vale of years. I can look back with calm resignation upon those hours of agony, with thankfulness upon those of comfort which I have passed."

The narrative then commenced as follows:

"*Elmwood, April* 10.

"I have somewhere read that the most ordinary life would, if committed to paper, make an amusing if not an interesting book. I will try the experiment, and write my own

history, for my own amusement; I shall then be able to judge how far the above saying is correct. Where ought I to begin? I yesterday attained my eighteenth year. That will never do; I ought first to narrate my birth, parentage, and education.

"To commence, therefore, in proper biographical style: My father, the Honourable George Elmwood, younger son of the Earl of Darnton, inherited in right of his mother the baronial mansion and domain in which we now reside. He was fortunate in his choice of a wife, for a more charming woman than my dearest mother, I believe exists not; she is the daughter and sole heiress of the great West India merchant, Sir George Dawson, and was married very young to a naval officer, who soon fell a sacrifice to the arduous duty in which he was engaged, leaving her a widow at two-and-twenty years of age, with a son then scarcely three. My mother remained inconsolable for some time; but with youth, beauty, accom-

plishments, and immense wealth at her command, the general opinion was that her widowhood would not long exceed her weeds. The world knew not my mother; she had loved her husband truly, and though she had little of his society, owing to the profession in which he was engaged, she mourned his loss sincerely, and for a great length of time.

"Six years had she been a widow, when the merits of my father distanced all competitors, and she was led a second time to the altar. My father and mother are, I firmly believe, happy as it is possible for mortals to be; their stream of life has hitherto run so smoothly, that I have never observed a ripple on its surface since the death of my little brother, ten years ago. My half-brother has been married above four years, and as boys, from the nature of their education, are usually but little at home, I have been the sole companion, pet, and plaything of both parents. In truth, I know not which has indulged me most, could

I love one more than the other, or give either the slightest uneasiness in my power to avoid, I should be the most ungrateful of human beings. Surely never daughter was blessed with such parents, so good, so amiable, so affectionate.

"But what am I writing? Not an eulogy on those parents, to whom I never can do justice, but a history of myself, at least such I meant it to be when I commenced. Yet what have I to relate? my hours have hitherto glided on almost imperceptibly—so smoothly—so happily—so tranquilly. Sorrow I know only by name; for those hours which have been devoted to study and improvement, have to me seemed only a change of pastime, since my governess is certainly possessed of that art, so frequently spoken of, so rarely to be met with, of making the hours of instruction agreeable. A life of tranquil happiness, like mine, has nothing in it to transfer to paper; but when I visit town, where I 'come out' next month, then my thoughts and feelings shall

be all transcribed. After all, there is something in those words 'come out,' which makes the ear tingle and the heart beat. I am happy, very happy, at Elmwood, but I certainly look forward with delight to mixing in the gay throng, of which I have heard so much.

" *London, May* 1.—Here we are, just returned from visiting jewellers, milliners, dressmakers, and all the fashionable tradespeople, whose assistance is necessary on 'coming out!' How bountiful are my beloved parents! I scarcely know what to do with such a profusion of ornaments and dresses. My maid, Turnbull, is delighted to see so many pretty things brought home for her young mistress.

" *May* 29. — My court dress is arrived, and is most beautiful; white satin, richly embroidered in white silk and silver. What a plume of ostrich feathers! how can my head support fifteen feathers!—'Oh, ma'am, what sweet lappets!'—'They are exquisitely fine and beautiful, Turnbull; but I never look at

point lace without thinking that the very trimming which I admire so much, has probably injured for ever, if not utterly extinguished, the sight of her who wrought it.'—'Dear young lady, what melancholy thoughts these are, but what a sweet necklace that is; the rows of pearls are so large, and the emerald and diamond centre so bright, I suppose no young lady at court will be so beautifully dressed as yourself.'—'Do you think so, Turnbull? then I am sure I shall be very uncomfortable, as I should dislike to be conspicuous.' 'La, ma'am, I did not mean that; I am sure white and silver and pearls can never look conspicuous.'' Recollecting at the same moment that I was indebted to a much better taste than Turnbull's for the choice of my dress, I soon sunk into repose, and dreamt of jewels and court dresses.

"*June* 6.—The eventful day is over; I have been presented! After all there is nothing so very awful in an introduction at court. My

father and mother have always been honoured with the esteem and friendship of their Majesties, on which account their daughter met with a highly flattering reception. The King was pleased to compliment my mother on my appearance, saying, 'You have brought with you one of the brightest ornaments of our court;' then, turning towards my father, he said, 'Take care of her, Elmwood, yours will be no easy task to guard such a treasure, now you have allowed it to be seen.' As these pages are for my own eyes alone, nobody can accuse me of vanity in copying these gracious expressions. My heart beat and my knees trembled, as I advanced towards their Majesties, and it was not until I had taken my station in a distant part of the circle, that I was enabled to observe what was passing around me. The scene was indeed a splendid one, though I thought the decorations of St. James's ill agreed with the magnificence of the dresses. The introductions

were nearly at an end, when the Duke of —— brought forward a gentleman, and introduced him to their Majesties, who conversed with him during several minutes. As he retired from them, his eyes caught mine, which, without being aware of it, I then found were rivetted upon him. Blushing deeply, I withdrew behind my mother, ashamed of having been observed to gaze so intently on the finest and most intellectual countenance I had ever seen. Who could it be? None of those around me appeared to know him, as I heard various whispered inquiries respecting the handsome stranger. After all, I think an introduction at court is formal, fatiguing, harassing. At the ball at St. James's the same evening, I was asked to dance by several noblemen of my father's acquaintance, but begged I might be excused. I am sure I had not courage for such an attempt. I returned home fatigued; but my dearest parents seemed so highly gratified by the impression my appearance had

made, as to repay me amply for the labour attending it. Though the present fashion may be calculated to display a splendid dress, it surely is not so becoming as the more simple style in vogue in the days of Charles, and which until now I have been allowed to assume; I wish I might still continue to do so.

"*June* 12.—We have had several very large dinner parties, and I have been already at four private balls of a magnificent description; I think balls much more agreeable than dinners, though I believe I sometimes get into little scrapes at the former, owing to not being thoroughly versed in the etiquette of such meetings; I shall understand all these things better next winter; I am now quite a novice. I forget my engagements, too, occasionally; but really, old and disagreeable people ought not to ask one to dance.—The carriage is at the door do you say, Turnbull? I am coming.

"*June* 13.—I believe I shall give up dating

my journal, or history, for it is so uncertain when I may find opportunities of continuing it. I was at a brilliant ball at Lady Campfield's last night; I met my old friend and neighbour Lady Jane Orme, and asked her if she thought I had offended Colonel James by the assurance that I was engaged the whole evening, as I should be very sorry to give him offence or uneasiness, particularly as he was an intimate friend of hers; to which she replied, scornfully tossing her head, 'Uneasiness, indeed! I flatter myself whilst *I* am in the room, Colonel James can wish to dance with no other person, though etiquette will not allow us *now* to dance together.' She then turned rudely from me, whilst I was overwhelmed with astonishment, not only by the manner, but the matter of her speech. 'Etiquette,' I inwardly exclaimed, 'prevent two such intimate friends dancing together, I cannot comprehend this.' I felt that I had done something wrong, though I scarcely knew

what; however, in the course of the evening, I took an opportunity of assuring Colonel James how much I regretted having been engaged, when he asked me to dance during two successive nights, and that I feared I had erred in expressing that regret to Lady Jane, since she appeared displeased. I had the pleasure of seeing that Colonel James did not seem offended; on the contrary, he was much gratified by my expressions of regret, and said that could he be so fortunate as to please me, Lady Jane's displeasure was a matter of no importance. This was very polite in him, but of course not exactly true, as he is so very intimate with the Ormes; however, it made me feel quite at ease, and as I engaged myself to dance with him the following evening, he would be convinced I had no intention of being rude.

"*June* 15.—Lady G——'s ball last night was the most delightful one I have ever been at; the elegance of the rooms—the tastefulness of the

decorations, the assemblage of nobility, the beauty of the females, with the splendour of their dresses, all lent a fascination to the scene, beyond what I have before met with. I cannot account for the pleasure I experienced; for after all, I have seen other balls, which in not one of these *agrémens*, taken separately, were inferior to Lady G——'s, yet the effect, in my opinion, was by no means to be compared with it. Why it was so I know not: I cannot reason on the subject, I can only state my own feelings. Immediately upon entering the ball-room, Colonel James claimed the performance of my promise. As I took my place to dance a minuet with him Lady Jane brushed past me almost rudely, without deigning to take any notice of the hand which I had involuntarily held out on seeing her approach. I felt the blood rush to my checks, and tears start into my eyes, whilst Colonel James, who saw how much I was hurt by Lady Jane's rudeness, gently pressed my hand, and besought me not to think

of one so little worthy of my friendship;' as he said this I raised my eyes, and beheld those of Lady Jane scornfully regarding me. As I was not conscious of having given her the slightest cause to be displeased with me, I rallied my spirits, and soon entered into a lively conversation with my partner, who is a pleasant and gentlemanly person. On joining my mother, the old Countess of Durnford begged to be allowed to introduce her nephew, Major Beaumont, to us; in an instant I recognised the fine figure, noble bearing, and intellectual countenance which had attracted my attention and admiration on the birthday, and which I had in vain looked for at every party I had since been in. I found in him what his appearance promised, a most agreeable companion; he had, although a young man, been many years abroad, and was possessed of a fund of anecdote and information on almost every subject. I begged to be excused dancing during the latter part of the evening, as I felt somewhat fatigued;

and as Major Beaumont took a seat near me, we had a great deal of pleasing conversation, in the course of which he informed us he had been obliged to leave London the morning after the drawing-room, on family affairs of some importance. When my father joined us, he expressed great pleasure in becoming acquainted with Major Beaumont, who, he had just heard from Lady Durnford, was the son of one of his earliest friends. I am very glad of this, as I am sure my father will be happy to cultivate his acquaintance. I wish I were not an heiress, for in consequence of being such I am constantly surrounded by a host of followers, who will not allow me to enjoy the society of any rational person for half an hour together. It is really tiresome that I cannot dance, or sit still as I like, without being tormented by a dozen men who would not care for me were it not for my father's wealth. The homage I receive comes not from the heart!

"*June* 25.—I last night accompanied my

father and mother to the Duchess of B——'s ball. I danced with Major Beaumont, with whose elegant and prepossessing manners I am more and more pleased. I wish Lord Wilton would not be quite so much my shadow as he is; for though I respect and like him as an old and esteemed friend of my father's, and a man of high talent, I can find more suitable companions in a ball-room. The heat was extreme at the Duchess of B——'s, in consequence of which I did not dance much.

"*July* 14.—Three weeks have elapsed since I last used my pen. How happy was I at that period—how miserable have I been since! Now that my mind is relieved from the apprehensions I have suffered, I can again collect my thoughts and commit them to paper. The evening after the Duchess of B——'s ball we went to the Opera, and although my mother appeared still to suffer from the effects of the heat of the preceding night, she would neither allow me to remain at home nor proceed to the

Opera-house unaccompanied by her. We had not been long there when she was seized with shivering fits, and obliged to return home. In a few hours she was declared to be in a high fever, occasioned by standing near an open window in a heated atmosphere; and shortly afterwards this fever was decided to be infectious, when I was strongly urged by my father to leave the house. 'Leave the house!' I exclaimed; 'leave my mother—that beloved being who has watched night and day by the cradle of her child;—leave her to be nursed and attended by mercenaries, who has never for one moment forsaken me!—No!—never—never!' 'Mary, my dearest child,' replied my weeping father, 'your mother would not be left to mercenary attendants; do you think whilst I live that I will cease to watch her—do you think the amiable Miss Jolliffe will quit her bedside? But, drawing me towards him as he spoke, 'my Mary, your dear mother is ill—*very ill;* should it not please the Almighty to spare her, and

should you, my child, take the infection, what then would become of your doubly-bereaved father?' I sunk from his encircling hands upon the floor, and with clasped hands and streaming eyes said, 'Father, forgive my opposition; send me from you if you so will it, I know I must obey your commands; but if infection be now to be dreaded, may I not already have imbibed it; in which case my absence, instead of retarding the disease would only hasten its approach; and should my beloved mother miss her child from her bedside, and ask for me, what must be her feelings to learn that her own daughter has fled from her presence, whilst the admirable Miss Jolliffe, an alien in blood, but a daughter in affection, braves every danger to watch by her. Dearest father, this is one common affliction, let it, I entreat you, be one common danger.'—'Stay, then, my most beloved child, under your parent's roof; I confide you to the care and guidance of an ever merciful Providence, who is alone able to judge what is best for us—bless thee, my sweet Mary!'

Then as my father's tears bedewed my cheeks, he fondly kissed and left me.

"Until that moment I had hoped against all hope; now it appeared certain that my mother was in imminent danger. I prayed, oh! how fervently I prayed, for the restoration of her health! In so doing I composed my own mind, and was again enabled to take my place at her bedside, where I spent many anxious days and nights, since I would not consent to retire to any other couch than a sofa in her apartment. My dearest father and Miss Jolliffe, she who had been the kind instructress of my youth, participated in my anxiety and in my attentions. At length the joyful words were pronounced, 'She is out of danger.' I heard them—I comprehended them—but I was denied the power of reply; joy is surely more difficult to bear than sorrow. Oh! what a fearful night was the last, on which the crisis of my beloved mother's disorder took place; we scarcely moved or spoke—we feared almost to breathe. We heard the danger was

past! I attempted to utter some words of thankfulness, but sunk into a state of insensibility.

"When I recovered I threw myself into my father's arms, and there sobbed forth my gratitude to the Almighty for the blessing we had received. My brother, too, who had been with us several days, joined in our thanksgiving. What a change in my feelings since yesterday! My mother is now sweetly sleeping, and I have, for the first time since her illness, taken a pen in my hand, that I may relieve my full heart by pouring out its feelings, where no eye but mine will see them. I never before knew real happiness, because I have never until now known its reverse. The dread of losing one so inexpressibly dear has caused me more fully to appreciate the blessings I enjoy. Oh! how gladly would I, a few short hours ago, have resigned every worldly advantage to be assured of my mother's life. What then is the value of that wealth which the world estimates so highly?

It is indeed vile dross. Yesterday the meanest domestic in our household was an object of envy to the wealthy heiress, who would gladly have exchanged situations to be assured of the health and happiness of all most dear to her. If I have ever had the meanness to be proud of my station and fortune, the recollection of the anxious hours I have so lately passed, and the feelings of that period, will, I trust, humble and cause me to remember the inutility of wealth when in affliction, except as a means of conferring happiness upon others.

"A week has elapsed since I wrote the above, during which time the dear invalid has been gradually progressing towards health. As soon as her strength will admit of it we shall return to Elmwood, by the pure air of which place it will, I hope, soon be entirely restored. She regrets that I should have been so long confined to the house, and wishes me to go out with her friend, Lady Hammond; but I have requested to be allowed to remain at home during the rest

of our *séjour* in town. Since the ball at the Duchess of B——'s, which I enjoyed so much, and which so nearly caused the death of my mother, I feel as if I should never again wish to attend a gay meeting of any kind.

"A few days ago I was surprised, immediately after breakfast, at which we were seated with Miss Jolliffe, by a request from my father to accompany him to his library. Miss Jolliffe having from her amiable qualities, gentle and unassuming manners, and superior attainments, ever been considered a member of the family, we never have had any secrets from her; and in addition to the above claims upon our affections, she has from childhood been the attached friend and companion of my mother, as they were brought up and educated together; but whilst one West India proprietor was fortunate enough to increase his before large property, the other, from various causes, was reduced to penury; thus when my mother was emerging from the school-room as

a star of the first magnitude, her less prosperous friend was obliged to apply those accomplishments in which she excelled, to the instruction of others, since nothing could induce her to become dependent upon her friends. When I was old enough to require the tuition of a governess, my beloved and affectionate mother succeeded in her wish that Miss Jolliffe should undertake the task, and now that it is concluded she has prevailed upon her to continue to make our house her home, since the labours of eight-and-twenty years have produced for her a small independence.

"To return from this long digression, we quitted Miss Jolliffe, and accompanied my father with considerable surprise to the library, when he addressed me thus: 'I have just received a letter from Colonel James.' 'Have you, sir?'—'Yes, and, I must acknowledge that I am much surprised, nay more, concerned at the contents.'—'Indeed, my dear father, I am sorry to hear you say so; what

can Colonel James know or write that is unpleasant, in which you are concerned?' My father smiled faintly, replying 'He certainly knows or thinks he knows something in which I am deeply interested, but I begin to hope there is some mistake on his side, and that he has not received your sanction to address me.' 'Indeed he has not, I have not seen him since my mother's illness, nor did he ever hint to me an intention of writing to you, nor can I conceive on what subject, or with what object he has done so.'—'*You*, my Mary, are the *subject* and the *object* of his letter: he wishes, as many others have done, to become my son-in-law.' —'Is it possible that he can have made such a request?'—'Yes, and in terms which show that he not only thinks highly of his own qualifications, but that he feels assured of your approval.'—'How very extraordinary!—I have danced and conversed with him occasionally, and thought him an agreeable and gentlemanly person; but that he should think of paying his addresses to me, does indeed excite my surprise; his age

would, in itself, have been a sufficient preventive, I should think, to his making any proposal for my hand.'—'Hem—' said my father, 'I do not quite agree with you there; although I should not readily give my consent for the colonel to be the husband of my treasure, I conceive his age is no objection, since he is merely in the prime of life.'—'Very true,' dearest father,' said I, archly, 'but allowing forty, which I am sure he must be, to be the *prime*, eighteen must be the *infancy*, consequently they are unsuitable.'—'We will not discuss this point,' replied my father, evidently somewhat chafed, though why I know not, 'since you agree with me in the wish to decline his addresses, which I shall do without delay.' After quitting my father I recalled to my recollection many sentiments and expressions of admiration, which had at different times fallen from the colonel, but which I had looked upon at the moment, as nothing more than a flattering attention from a man of his age. I heard a few days ago that Colonel James and Lady Jane Orme were engaged to

each other, but in that report, it is now evident, there was no truth.

"What a cruelly cutting letter my father has received from Colonel James. I can copy it from memory. I think it is indelibly impressed there, and I should be sorry to forget what I trust may be of use to me hereafter.

"'Sir,

"'I received your polite letter in answer to the proposal I had the honour of making for the hand of your daughter. Since you assure me that Miss Elmwood was not at all aware of any attachment on my part, or that I harboured any intention of proposing for her, I am bound to believe it; at the same time, I beg to assure you that had I not met with the greatest encouragement from Miss Elmwood, and likewise had reason to suppose myself the object of her *decided preference,* I should not for an instant have thought of proposing for her hand. Were the treatment I have received from the young

lady generally known, it would probably prevent others falling into a similar error; but as it is not very agreeable to be pointed at as a rejected suitor, I will be obliged by what has occurred being kept secret. With great respect, I have the honour to remain, Sir,

'Your obedient Servant,

'W. JAMES.'

"When my father placed this letter before me, I felt my cheeks glow with anger; then, putting my hands over my burning face, I burst into tears. Instantaneously the origin of this mistake was before me. It had arisen from the regret I had so innocently expressed at having been obliged to decline dancing with him during two successive nights. What I meant merely as an act of politeness he construed into admiration and love. Oh! man—man!—never speak of the vanity of our sex, since thine outweighs it a hundred times!

"My father was, of course, much displeased

by the receipt of such a letter, and asked if I could explain the meaning of it, when I immediately informed him of the circumstance which I supposed Colonel James had so entirely misconstrued. He smiled as I concluded my narration, saying, he scarcely knew which most to wonder at, the vanity and impertinence of the gallant officer, or the simplicity of his novice. 'However,' added he, 'since the Colonel is a losing gamester, we must forgive him, not only for having ventured for such a stake, but for those expressions of displeasure which mortified self-love and vanity have occasioned; and to you, Mary, this will prove a lesson for the future.'

"Although I do not visit, my father and mother make a point of my riding on horseback daily. We are generally joined by several friends; Major Beaumont almost always meets us, or sets out with us, and very frequently Lord Wilton, as at this period he is not obliged to devote so much time to state affairs

as when he arrived first in town. He is extremely clever and agreeable, but I wish he did not think that politeness requires him to pay me such particular attention, as there are many questions which I wish to ask Major Beaumont relative to his foreign campaigns, which Lord Wilton's being of the party prevents, as from his rank, greater age, and acknowledged high talent, he most frequently leads the conversation. Notwithstanding which, I believe Major Beaumont's talents to be fully equal to his lordship's, and not less accompanied by genuine wit; indeed I think him a most delightful companion.—I hope my father will invite him to Elmwood.

"*Elmwood Park, Aug.* 1.

"We are once more at that beloved spot, which has been the scene of so many tranquilly happy days. My dearest mother has nearly regained her strength, and looks as lovely as ever. What a comfort has Miss Jolliffe been to us

during her illness—we never can be sufficiently grateful to her; but her love for my mother is that of an attached sister rather than a friend, whilst for myself, I believe her affection is nearly maternal. The country looks beautiful; the late rains have made the vegetation unusually luxuriant, and all around me seems gay and animated; yet I do not feel as cheerful as before I went to town. My father thinks me paler and thinner than formerly, and frequently inquires if I am well. We have requested some friends who were engaged to come to us this month, to postpone their visit for a few weeks, lest my mother should exert herself beyond her strength. All the neighbourhood have called, except Lady Jane Orme, who used to be one of the first to visit us after we returned from town. I have not seen or heard from her since that evening on which she behaved with so much rudeness. My father has this moment asked me to accompany him to Lord Orme's; which I shall do, as I have never mentioned Lady Jane's extraor-

dinary behaviour to him, thinking it originated in some momentary fit of petulance or ill-humour.

"We have been at Lord Orme's, and were received by him in his usual friendly way; but the servant said her ladyship was 'not at home,' although I am inclined to think she was in the house, as I am pretty sure, I caught a glimpse of her figure gliding across the hall. *N'importe*, if she chooses to be offended without cause, it must be so. Lord Orme told my father he expected his relative, Major Beaumont, to visit him shortly. I was not before aware that they were related. My father, in reply to this intimation, said he should hope to see Major Beaumont frequently at Elmwood, as he possessed a threefold claim upon his esteem; namely, his own merit, his connexion with his lordship, and his being the son of an old schoolfellow and friend. I wonder whether Major Beaumont admires Lady Jane's style of beauty; she is certainly a fine woman, but I think too masculine in person and manners for his taste; and yet if

he does not admire her, I am surprised that he should visit Ormesby, as the old lord, at all times rather prosy and disagreeable, is at this time threatened with a fit of the gout.

"Miss Jolliffe has this moment informed me that Lady Jane was a few weeks since on the eve of being married to Colonel James. She has received her information from an authentic source, a sister-in-law of Lord Orme's, with whom she has long been on intimate terms; who added that soon after my appearance in town, the colonel withdrew his pretensions--or more correctly, that on some slight difference of opinion, a dispute arising between the parties, Lady Jane having proposed that they should put a termination to their engagement, he assented so readily as to prevent the possibility of a renewal on her side. In consequence of this misunderstanding, Lord Orme's family left town earlier than usual; since which period poor Lady Jane has worn the willow, telling all her intimate friends that Colonel James was drawn

from his allegiance by my coquetry and arts! Miss Jones adds to this information that Colonel James has within the last few days written to entreat the forgiveness of Lady Jane for his delinquency; assuring her that although he had received the greatest encouragement from me, his attachment to her was such as to preclude the possibility of his taking advantage of it, for that whilst life remained he should continue true to his first and early love! Lady Jane has kindly believed, or what answers equally well, affected to believe his protestations, and this day the gallant officer is expected at Ormesby House. A month ago this man proposed himself as my husband! Poor Lady Jane!—so after all, I was in part, though very unintentionally, to blame for the uneasiness and mortification you have suffered. Had he never resumed his addresses to you, it would have been well, I think, for what reliance can be placed on such a man?

"I can now more readily account for Lady

Jane's strange behaviour towards me, for believing, as she evidently did, and I fear still does, that I endeavoured to draw her lover from her by those coquetish arts which she ought to have known I utterly despised; she naturally felt indignant at such conduct, and I fear has not only formed a very indifferent opinion of me herself, but may cause her friends to imbibe a similar one.' Miss Jones has never approved of her niece's engagement to Colonel James, and is, therefore, by no means inclined to be silent upon the events that have taken place; but favouring me, as she does, with her good opinion, she believes not one word of Colonel James's statement of having received encouragement from myself. Lady Jane will, no doubt, endeavour to prejudice Major Beaumont against me when she arrives. I should very much regret that: as to be thought meanly of by a man, who not only stands very high in the estimation of the world himself, but who is the son of an old friend of my father's, would be very mortifying.

He must scorn the woman whom he believes capable of sacrificing the happiness of another for the gratification of her own vanity.

"I have consulted Miss Jolliffe as to the best plan to pursue, in the hope of preventing Major Beaumont forming a prejudicial opinion of my conduct. She surprised me by inquiring my reason for being so anxious on the subject. 'Is it not natural,' I said, 'to wish for the favourable opinion of those whom one esteems.'— 'Certainly, my love,' she replied, 'but I do not exactly comprehend why you should appear so much more apprehensive of suffering in Major Beaumont's estimation, than that of any one else.' I scarcely knew what reply to make, although my reasons had seemed quite satisfactory as I inwardly repeated them a few minutes before. Seeing my hesitation, my kind friend added, 'Do not allow yourself to feel any uneasiness on this subject, for you may rest assured that those, whose good opinion is worth having, will not believe any thing to your preju-

dice, which Lady Jane Orme or Colonel James can say, for the latter has evidently been a disappointed suitor, and the former is, or has been, a jealous rival.' Notwithstanding this, I must acknowledge I am by no means satisfied that Major Beaumont should listen to such a tale without a chance of having it refuted.

" *September.*—Although my time has been very much occupied lately by friends staying in the house, nothing has occurred to me individually worth notice. At breakfast this morning my father mentioned that he expected Lord Wilton would be at Elmwood in the course of the week. To which I replied, 'I wish he would go and visit the owls and bats in his own ruinous castle.' My father answered me only by a reproving look; but my mother said, 'Mary, you forget yourself; surely your father's friends ought always to be cordially welcomed by you.'—'Indeed, dearest mother,' I replied, 'I beg your and my father's pardon for my flippancy; I meant not half what I expressed,

though I own I should prefer hearing that Lord Wilton was going to visit Wilton Castle; since, however highly it may honour me, he has latterly given me more of his society than is altogether agreeable when visiting us.'—'You certainly ought to consider it a high honour to attract the notice of a man who is no less distinguished for his superior qualifications in the drawing-room than the cabinet, and by whose friendship I have always felt flattered.'—'I am fully sensible of the honour Lord Wilton does me, my dear father; but indeed I am so humble in my wishes, that I should feel infinitely better pleased were he not to bestow so much of his attention upon one so insignificant as myself; and I most sincerely hope, that he will not think it requisite to devote much of his valuable time to me on the present occasion.'—'*I* should not be satisfied were he to neglect *my* daughter, and since he comes here, not only as my visiter, but as my most intimate and highly-esteemed friend, it is my particular request, nay command, that

you treat him with the greatest respect and attention, and receive any civilities he may be disposed to show you with gratitude.'

"I had scarcely ever been addressed with such severity by my father before, and whilst my eyes filled with tears, I could only bow my acquiescence to his wish—his *command.* On raising my still tearful eyes, I observed an interchange of looks between my mother and Miss Jolliffe, which seemed in an instant to explain to me the intentions of my father with regard to Lord Wilton. I was, then, meant to be the wife of this proud descendant of princes—this highly-gifted statesman—this man of profound erudition—this accomplished gentleman! All this he was universally acknowledged to be; and I—the simple, unsophisticated country girl—with only the advantages of birth but little inferior to his own; youth, health, and a tolerable person, am the chosen partner of this *mighty* man. 'Tis true, I shall have wealth sufficient to rebuild his dilapidated castle, and to restore the splendour of

other days to its owner; but Lord Wilton is too high-minded to allow so paltry a consideration to govern his thoughts for an instant! Lord Wilton may be all that he is represented; I must admit his eloquence to be great, his powers of conversation to be varied and attractive, his person and manners highly finished; but with all this, there is, in my opinion, a want of heart —a something cold and pompous—a look and manner which seem to say, 'I admire myself too much, to have much admiration to bestow upon others:' yet at times, I must admit there is a strange fascination about him, which it is difficult to comprehend or withstand. Yes, dearest father, if you command me to marry Lord Wilton, I must disobey you, for I cannot love him; but I will promise never to marry one whom you disapprove. While these thoughts arose in my mind, my father left the room; and on recovering from the reverie into which I had been plunged, I observed the eyes of my mother and Miss Jolliffe fixed upon my coun-

tenance in earnest attention; but as neither spoke, I likewise retired to commune with my own heart, and to commit my thoughts to paper.

"*September* 30*th*.—The last has been rather an eventful fortnight, and yet I have felt less inclined than usual to commit the events which have occurred, or the thoughts which have arisen, to their usual silent depository. Lord Wilton arrived on the day appointed for his visit; and on the same day, somewhat unexpectedly, but most agreeably—to me, at least—Sir George and Lady Ford, their three daughters and two sons; they purposed spending a day with us only, *en passant*, but were prevailed upon to lengthen their stay until ten days had elapsed. In addition to these, we have had a constant succession of visiters at the park. Lord Wilton has evidently devoted himself entirely to me. From the hour of his arrival I have been apparently the principal object of attraction to him, whilst he has been the centre of attraction to all others. Lady Jane Orme

has been several times here with Colonel James; she is now as friendly in manner as formerly: but I fancy I can perceive that one motive for her frequent visits is, to show her power over the colonel, and imagined triumph over me. Whether my suspicion be correct or not, I am glad to be again upon friendly terms with one whom I have known from childhood. Major Beaumont has always accompanied Lady Jane and Colonel James, which has taken off the awkwardness of our meeting very much. I was surprised to see the easy assurance with which the colonel met the cold reception of my father, on his first visit: however, as the former is certainly an agreeable man, and likely, by his union with Lady Jane Orme, to be a resident in the neighbourhood, we all agreed that it was better to receive his advances towards a renewal of our acquaintance, as if nothing unpleasant had occurred; if he did not feel it, I could readily overlook what his mortified vanity led him to write or utter.

"Yesterday morning we went to view the curious rocks which are situated twelve miles from Elmwood. The Orme family, attended by Colonel James and Major Beaumont, accompanied us. Aware that it was reported Lord Wilton and myself were to be united, and having reason to suppose that the report gained credence even amongst my own immediate friends, I was determined at the risk of displeasing my father, to endeavour to evince my disinclination for his attentions. I had accidentally discovered that my father meant Lord Wilton to drive me in his phaeton; the carriages were at the door, and already several of the party had set out, when his lordship offered to hand me into his carriage, upon which I drew back, saying, 'Thank you, my lord, but I accompany my mother.'—'Mr. Elmwood wished me to have the honour of driving you; I therefore hope you will not deprive me of so great a pleasure.'—'Your lordship must excuse me; if I do not accom

pany my mother, I must decline going to the rocks.' Lord Wilton withdrew, with an air of dignified and proud submission to my decree, whilst I beheld looks of consternation and astonishment around me. I entered my mother's carriage with such rapidity, that there was scarcely time for any one to assist me; ere I was seated, my father advanced, saying, 'Mary, how is this, I thought you were going with Lord Wilton?'—'No, sir, I have requested his Lordship to excuse me: if it is inconvenient for me to accompany my mother, I must entreat you to be kind enough to suffer me to remain at home.' I was answered only by a look of grave displeasure, ere my father turned away; when leaning back I burst into tears. My mother and Miss Jolliffe, who were already seated in the landau, looked at me with tender commiseration, united with some surprise, and after ordering the coachman to drive on, the former asked the cause of my emotion.

"I then told my mother that Lord Wil-

ton's attentions were now become so obvious to every one, that it was generally believed we were to be united, and I was determined as far as in me lay, to put a stop to such a report. My mother looked grave, and then gently inquired what objection I could make to Lord Wilton were he to propose himself as a suitor for my hand. 'A thousand, dearest mother.'—' Let me hear a few of them, my love.'—' His age is surely alone a sufficient objection.'—' I admit it to be one, Mary; I do not like dissimilarity of age, yet in this case it is less objectionable than many; for his lordship is certainly a very young looking man for the age which I understand him to be, about two and forty, and his fine person distances in appearance all his young competitors.' 'Not all, mamma, surely he cannot be compared with Major Beaumont.'—' Major Beaumont is a very fine young man, yet I doubt whether at Lord Wilton's age he will be as handsome.' 'Perhaps not, but he has a finer countenance

than Lord Wilton ever could have had; besides when Major Beaumont is as old as Lord Wilton now is, I shall be nearly as old as you are, mamma.'—'What has that to do with the question we were discussing, Mary?' I felt myself blush and look very foolish, though I scarcely know why. As I made no answer, 'Now, Mary, I should like to hear a few more of your thousand objections, what are they?' asked my mother. At that moment I could not recollect one, excepting that I did not like him. 'For that,' said my mother, 'you are surely able to assign some cause; Lord Wilton is universally looked up to as one of the first men in the kingdom; he has rank, talent, acknowledged worth, an agreeable person, elegant manners, and, I believe, a devoted attachment to you; to set against all these advantages, he has only one disadvantage, that of being a few years older than you could wish.' 'Oh, mamma, that is not all, indeed there is something about him which I cannot like;

at least I cannot think of him as a husband.' 'You have not formed any other attachment, Mary?'—'Oh no, dearest mamma, indeed I have not.'—'There is no one whom you prefer to Lord Wilton, then?'—'Yes, an infinite number.'—'Young Ford?'—'No, I am sure I do not prefer young Ford, he is such a coxcomb.'—'His brother John?'—'Oh, no, John I think has scarcely common sense.'—'Sir Harry?'—'My dear mamma, you must be laughing at me; how can I for an instant compare such men as those with Lord Wilton.' 'What do you think of Major Beaumont?' 'That he is a thousand times more agreeable than Lord Wilton, and in every respect, except rank and talents, his superior; and in the latter he is fully equal I think to his lordship.' I answered unhesitatingly and with energy; but had no sooner done so, than I felt the blood rush into my cheeks, and wished, though I knew not why, that I had not expressed my opinion so fully. I sunk into a

train of reflection, which was uninterrupted by my companions until we arrived at the rocks.

"Lord Wilton and Major Beaumont advanced towards the carriage, as it stopped for us to alight: the latter appeared inclined to offer his assistance to my mother; for he, as well as all our other friends, gave way to Lord Wilton when present, but upon this occasion his lordship seemed little inclined to take advantage of the opportunity of paying me any attention; as, offended no doubt by my refusal to be with him during our drive, he turned from me, attending only to my mother, by which means Major Beaumont became my companion for the remainder of the morning. The scenery was so romantic and sublime, the air so pure and exhilarating, that I soon lost every trace of previous uneasiness, and with renewed spirits proceeded on our pedestrian excursion, which concluded with a repast, taken under the shade of a stupendous

rock, which seemed almost as if suspended in the air.

"On our return to Elmwood, my father requested me to follow him to his study. I did so, trembling like a culprit, though he was ever so indulgent, that it would have been difficult for me to assign a cause for my present apprehension. My father then informed me that he had been much displeased by my conduct towards Lord Wilton, and requested that he might never behold a repetition of it. I instantly summoned courage to state that I had thus acted in consequence of my wish to put a stop to the absurd rumours which were in circulation, respecting Lord Wilton and myself. 'Absurd!' exclaimed my father, 'how absurd, Mary?'—'Surely, my dear sir, a report that your old friend and companion is likely to be united to your daughter, must be looked upon by many persons as absurd, though, without doubt, some are credulous enough to believe it true.'—'I

am surprised, Mary, to hear you speak in so foolish and childish a manner;' replied my father, 'only your youth and extreme ignorance of the world can excuse such folly. Where is there a man equal to Lord Wilton in every qualification which man esteems and woman loves? Where the woman except yourself, who would not feel honoured by his attentions? Not only in his public character is he looked up to, as likely to become one of the strongest pillars of the state, but in his private character, as one of the most amiable of men. It has long been the most ardent wish of my heart that Lord Wilton should select my daughter for his wife; but I durst not flatter myself that he who could choose from the noblest and wealthiest of the land, would, after remaining unmarried until forty, fix upon my little simple country girl to share his honours; yet when I beheld her blooming beauty expand into perfection, and her graces of person outdone by those of her

mind, I fondly flattered myself none could know her intimately and not love her. Such, Mary, were the feelings of your fond father. I gave Lord Wilton the opportunity to cultivate your regard and esteem; with him the consequence has been what I foresaw, he became ardently attached to you, and sometime ago proposed for your hand. I wished you to have a longer period in which to become acquainted with his numerous good and great qualities, ere I named his proposals to you, and felt no doubt that you would, from your strong sense and superior discernment, ultimately return his affection as I wished. I believed my daughter superior to the folly of expecting to find in a husband those great qualities which are, I am sure, peculiarly calculated to attract her admiration, and youth in addition. Were Lord Wilton an old man, or even were he approaching old age, I would not think of uniting him to you, but he is, in fact, quite in the prime of life.'

" I perceived that my father was seriously

displeased with me, and therefore sat with my eyes fixed upon the floor, pale and silent. 'You do not speak, Mary, what am I to understand—are my fondest hopes to be disappointed by my child?' I made an effort to answer, but the words died away on my lips. 'Why do you not speak, my love?' These words were not only kind in themselves, but uttered in so gentle a tone of voice, that bursting into tears, I sunk at my father's feet. 'Mary, what means this agitation—you cannot suppose that I will put any force upon your inclinations?' I continued to weep, and press his hand to my lips. 'Rise, my child,' he added tremulously, 'I would not, to make you mistress of the world, put any constraint upon you on so important a point; all I desire is, that you will treat Lord Wilton with the civility and attention which is due from you to my most intimate and esteemed friend, whilst he remains my guest, and I will inform him that you at present feel a strong

repugnance to the idea of marriage;—I think I may say so with truth; may I not, Mary?' With a glowing cheek, though still tearful eye, I replied, 'Certainly, sir, I have no wish to marry —I could not bear the idea of leaving you and my beloved mother.' As I raised my eyes from the floor, they met the fixed and earnest gaze of my father, and deeply, painfully blushing, they again fell beneath it. With a sigh he turned away, and I felt myself once more alone, and at liberty to ruminate upon the events of the day.

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"How thankful ought I to be to that kind Providence which has preserved me from such imminent peril! What a miraculous escape have I had! Although two days have elapsed since the accident to which I allude took place, I can scarcely now write with composure. My father had driven me in his phaeton to Stonemoor, the other ladies occupying various carriages; whilst many of the gentlemen, among whom were Lord Wilton and Major Beaumont,

rode on horseback. We had driven as far as was practicable, when my father ordered the cavalcade to stop. As the eye glanced over the tract of land before us, there was nothing to excite observation beyond an almost flat and sterile common, covered thickly with loose stones, which rendered it impossible for a carriage to proceed, and was far from desirable even for horsemen. A space of ground, forming a narrow footpath, half a mile in length, had been cleared of stones, or levelled, by long use, although to those unacquainted with the place it seemed without any other aim than that of leading to a clump of old firs and stunted hawthorns; these, however, concealed the entrance to a deep ravine, which formed the greatest natural curiosity in our neighbourhood.

"I had frequently descended to the extremity of the yawning abyss, and each time with increased admiration of its romantic and picturesque beauty. The narrow path wound through the stupendous rocks, now making the head giddy as it led you along the edge of a tremendous

precipice, overhanging the deep glen below—now almost inclosing you between two immense walls of solid stone; until arrived at the brink of a river, compressed within such narrow bounds as scarcely to seem deserving of the name, whilst its extreme depth caused it to flow almost noiselessly, till, with one fearful crash, it dashed down a rock, a depth of more than fifty feet, whence it rushed furiously forward, foaming and breaking over the huge fragments which had fallen from above. As the eye glanced upwards, and beheld the magnificent rocks, which seemed to totter over the river rolling at their feet, it required more than common nerve not to feel some apprehension of being buried beneath them. Yet, with the exception of those masses, broken off by occasional storms, they had probably remained in this threatening position for thousands of years, since it could not be doubted that this chasm owed its origin to some great convulsion of nature, the rocks on each side bearing evi-

dent marks of having been violently wrenched asunder.

"As my father descended from the phaeton, after desiring the party to stop, my mother addressed him, and he, hastening to the carriage in which she was seated, threw the reins towards me, but ere I could gain firm hold, a gun went off so near as to alarm one of the horses, which was young; and the other, though older, being very spirited, they dashed violently forward, overturning every thing in their way; one of the horsemen in vain attempted to impede their progress; they, if possible, redoubled their speed—we appeared to fly like lightning, and in the direction of that frightful chasm to explore the terrible wonders of which was the cause of our excursion. I saw the horses' heads within a yard of the verge of the tremendous precipice!—to jump out was certain destruction! —to remain where I was I felt to be little better. My heart sank within me as I beheld the dreadful fate which awaited me! When

at this instant a horseman darted across—I saw that it was Major Beaumont, and believing that he was actually falling down the precipice, I gave one loud and piercing scream—I knew—and saw no more!

"When I opened my eyes I found myself placed upon a bed, my father and mother seated by me, watching me with intense anxiety;—I felt the blood slowly trickle down my arm, whilst a stranger held my wrist. 'Thank God! she revives!' said my mother. 'She must be kept perfectly quiet,' replied the medical practitioner. My father then gently whispered an inquiry after me; I made an ineffectual attempt to answer him, whilst the surgeon again observed that it was desirable that I should not be spoken to, nor induced to exert myself in any way; consequently, my parents remained in silence by my bedside until I regained strength and recollection to whisper, 'Is Major Beaumont still alive?'—'He is,' replied my mother, 'not only alive, but comparatively little hurt in saving a life so precious as that of my sweet

child, and in so doing he has likewise saved that of her parents.'

"Composed by the answer I had received, and weakened by the loss of blood, I soon sunk into a slumber, from which I awoke much refreshed, and was able to return home the following day. Major Beaumont, I find, is at Elmwood, my father having prevailed upon him to remain here until his arm, which is severely sprained, is quite well. I have not yet seen him, since it is thought that I might be too much agitated for the present shattered state of my nerves, were I to have an interview with one who so nobly risked his own life to preserve mine. I cannot bear to think of that horrible moment, when I saw him dash between the maddened animals and the fearful precipice! How mortal strength could check their speed I know not; I only know that I was on the brink of destruction, and that my life has been preserved by Major Beaumont, whilst Lord Wilton —the *fondly attached, adoring* Lord Wilton, who by his proximity to the carriage at the

moment the horses took fright, by his superior muscular power, and by his pretensions for my favour, ought to have interposed to avert my destruction—only ordered his groom to do so!

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"Several days have now elapsed since the accident which alarmed us all so much took place. Major Beaumont was much more seriously hurt than I imagined; his arm was not sprained but broken by the violent effort necessary to check the horses; he is still confined to his room; as soon as he is able to leave it for his dressing-room I am to see him. What an agitating moment that will be! My dear father says he never saw a more nobly daring act than that of Major Beaumont. 'We all thought,' continued he, 'that you were lost to us from the moment we perceived the direction the furious animals had taken; I, being on foot, could only call aloud to the grooms—A thousand guineas to the man who saves my daugh-

ter!—All galloped forward, but all, *save one,* stopped ere they reached the fearful precipice only *one* dared attempt to arrest the progress of the horses, by throwing himself between them and the gulf below, thus resolving to sacrifice his own life or save my child's; a kind Providence aided his efforts, and you, my Mary, were restored to your fond parents. To Major Beaumont I feel that we never can be sufficiently grateful.' As my father spoke he glanced reproachfully at Lord Wilton, who changed colour at the implied reproof. The following day his lordship left Elmwood, coldly bidding me adieu, and whilst his expression and manner towards my mother were polite, I thought I discerned somewhat sarcastic in the tone with which he said he hoped her health would not be injured by her care of the gallant soldier.

"*October.*—Major Beaumont now sits with us as usual. I feel almost ashamed of recording, though only for my own perusal, my

foolish conduct during our first meeting. It was natural I should be agitated, but I think I was more so than I ought to have been; I tried to thank him, but found myself almost unable to utter a word. At length, throwing myself into my mother's arms, I said in whispered accents, 'Thank him, dearest mother, for I cannot.'—'It is I, my child, who have most to thank him for, since in saving your life, he saved those of your father and myself.' Major Beaumont took my hand, which he raised to his lips, stammered forth something about the obligation not being worth naming, then laughed at his blunder, and finally besought us to honour him by taking seats in his dressing-room. In a few days he was sufficiently convalescent to join us in the drawing-room; though he requires our aid occasionally, being unable to use his right arm. My father says Major Beaumont shall not leave Elmwood, until he is able to carry his gun and manage his horse; and has deputed

me to sit next him at dinner, that I may carve for him, as it is my peculiar duty to endeavour to make him feel as little inconvenience as possible from the broken limb.

"Our party is now much reduced, as the Desboroughs and Olivers, who have been some time with us, left us yesterday. Sir George and Lady Eustace, with their son and daughter, are coming here to-morrow. I wish they had postponed their visit a short time, as such a succession of company is harassing to the spirits; I have not felt it so until lately, but this I suppose originates in the shock my nervous system received in the dreadful alarm I experienced so short a time since.

"*December.*—I have been too happy during the last few weeks, to attempt expressing my feelings on paper; I am still unable to do so, although the events which cause them may be narrated. Events, do I say? It is only one event, and that one of the most frequent occurrence, which thus affects me.

Major Beaumont proposed to leave Elmwood some time ago; my father urged him to remain, when he, with much agitation, stated his absence to be absolutely necessary. My father pressed for the cause, and was at length informed, that he had, almost before he was aware of it, become attached to me, whilst conscious of the splendid match I might naturally be expected to make, and of the mediocrity of his own fortune, he did not dare to hope for success; it therefore became necessary for his own peace of mind that he should immediately depart.

"What farther passed, I know chiefly by its consequences. Major Beaumont addressed himself to me with my father's sanction, and as I am above the littleness of affecting a coldness I did not feel, I frankly owned that he was in possession of my esteem—my friendship—phsaw! why am I ashamed to own it, even to myself?—I candidly acknowledged that he possessed my *entire affection.* Never were gratitude and joy more strongly depicted than in Major Beaumont. Our interview, which lasted two hours,

seemed but as many minutes, so swiftly time speeds with the happy. I could not occupy five minutes in recounting what passed, yet every syllable seemed, at this moment, of importance, and had not the dressing bell warned us to conclude, I know not how long we might have continued thus to converse.

"Ere we met at dinner, my beloved parents saw and blest their happy daughter. 'I have,' said my father, 'foreseen this conclusion for some time; Major Beaumont's disinterested attachment to you was fully evinced on the day he so gallantly saved your life, at the peril of his own; from that hour I resolved that he should be my son-in-law. He has, I am firmly convinced, every great quality that a human being can possess; his birth, though not noble, is unobjectionable, since he is lineally descended from one of the most ancient families in the kingdom; his fortune is small, but we, my Mary, are able to supply that deficiency; his character stands so high for every moral and religious virtue, that in giving him my only child, I feel assured I am placing her hap-

piness in the power of one who will guard her from every possible ill; your opinion of him I have long known. I feared that you had imbibed an attachment to Major Beaumont, even before your rejection of Lord Wilton. I say that I feared it, because at that period I own my most anxious wish was to see you his lordship's wife. The difference between his conduct and that of Major Beaumont, at the dreadful moment when you were so providentially saved from destruction, through the courageous interference of the latter, convinced me that you were yourself the best judge of what was for your own happiness in wedded life, and I trust and believe we shall neither of us be deceived.'

"More, much more, my dear parents said, all of which is indelibly impressed on their grateful daughter's memory. Weeks have fled rapidly since the period alluded to; so delightfully have they passed, that it seems only so many days; yet I have nothing to recount. We have had much severe weather, and for some time have been unable to leave the house,

yet time has never hung heavy on our hands. Our hours have been enlivened, as we have used our pencils or needles, by the beautiful reading of Major Beaumont. In February we are to go to town, when every thing will be finally arranged for our union, which is to take place in June. Since my parents are wrapt up in the society of their daughter, Major Beaumont has kindly proposed that we should not leave them. To this at first my father would not assent, being fearful that they might prove a restraint upon us; but he has since arranged that the house in town shall be our own, whilst he and my mother will when there be our visiters; and we are to have an entire *suite* of apartments fitted up for our accommodation at Elmwood, where we are to reside in summer.

" *London, April.*—We have been busily engaged ever since we came to town, although not so agreeably as in the country, since our time is too much occupied in visiting, and being visited. Major Beaumont says that he can now scarcely ever gain half an hour's

conversation with me. I lament this equally with himself, and look forward with great pleasure to our return to dear Elmwood, when we shall bid adieu to balls, and operas, and gaiety. We have been sitting for our pictures; that is, my father, mother, Major Beaumont, and myself; they are all thought to be good likenesses, but mine appears to me to be somewhat flattering, whilst Major Beaumont's does not do him justice; he thinks the same of mine, whilst my dear partial mother thinks them both like the originals, though not handsome enough for either. We have been occupied lately in ordering furniture for our own apartments at Elmwood, carriages, jewels, et cetera. Every thing is to be of as elegant a description as if I was going to be united to a man of ten times Major Beaumont's wealth. My father says his child shall have every enjoyment that he can bestow, without waiting until his death confers them upon her; as he has always thought those parents judged ill, who rolling in wealth, and surrounded by luxury, suffered their children to live in com-

parative poverty, and enduring great privations, until their own death placed them in affluence, probably at a period of life when no longer able to enjoy it. Of course this opinion could only relate to those whose income, like his, exceeded their own wants or expenditure. Such being his ideas, every thing relating to my fortune was arranged by him on the most liberal scale. In a month from this time we shall return to Elmwood, soon after which our union will take place. I shall then for the first time quit my parents for a short period. We propose going into Switzerland, where, in a few weeks, my father, mother, and Miss Jolliffe, will meet us. What a happy joyous party we shall be!

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"Five years have rolled over my head since the foregoing pages were written; years how little foreseen at that period! Could we read in the book of fate the page of our own destiny, how few could live and yet retain their senses Five years ago I was young, beautiful (I may

say so now), rich—not merely in the common acceptation of the term—but rich beyond compare in an affianced husband, who was unequalled in every noble and engaging quality—in the best of parents, and in the gratification of every wish. I was happy! oh, so happy as few have been! What am I now? Am I not still young—still rich—still admired? Then wherefore am I not happy? In the eyes of the world, it is true, I am still the wealthy heiress, but in my own, I am reduced to the most abject penury, since I have lost all that I most prized on earth! Where is that noble being whose attachment conferred the highest honour upon the chosen of his heart? Where are my indulgent, my inestimable parents? All, all gone, and I am left to weep alone.'

"I have frequently sat down with an intention of committing to paper the dreadful events which have occurred, but have hitherto been unequal to the task. How different were the feelings with which I wrote the preceding pages, from those which have since occupied this bosom. Then all around was joy and happiness; how

soon was every trace of either removed from my view? I am now, I trust, no longer a repiner at the decrees of an all-wise Providence, which ordaineth every thing as it seemeth best, whilst poor weak mortals like myself too frequently, in the first hours of anguish, dare to arraign His justice and mercy! In vain I strive to recall to my mind all the particulars of that dreadful event, which, like the eruption of some volcanic crater, swept all before it—happiness, memory, intellect, health—all, all 'at one fell swoop' destroyed. I must endeavour to collect my scattered thoughts ere I proceed, when I hope I may gain strength of mind to write more collectedly and coherently.

"Another day has elapsed, and I resume that pen which for so long a period has been laid aside, and which I was yesterday under the necessity of resigning. I have schooled my feelings into a calmer state, and trust I can at length commit to paper the particulars of that dreadful event which destroyed my earthly hopes.

"The short time which was expected to intervene between that on which the latter part of my journal was written, and my nuptials, was passed in perfect happiness. We had been returned from town to Elmwood about a fortnight; our house was filled by friends, who were asked to attend in honour of its daughter's marriage, which was to take place on the following day. My father's uncle, the old Bishop of ——, who was to perform the ceremony, and his own brother, the Earl of Darnton, with his wife and family, were with us. Major Beaumont was staying with his relative, Lord Orme. Lord Wilton was at his own castle, he having when in town, requested to be allowed to make one of the wedding party, to which my father gladly acceded, since it showed that he was sincere in having expressed to him the regret he felt for his own folly, in having ever thought of marriage, occupied as his time and mind were by public business; to which he added, that so far from being displeased by Miss Elmwood's refusal, he was grateful for it, since he was at length fully

aware that it was impossible to unite the two characters of statesman and a desirable domestic husband; and much as he must always admire and esteem her whom he had addressed, he was assured she would be happier with Major Beaumont than he could have made her, and consequently he was more than reconciled to the event likely to take place. My father had been much pleased by Lord Wilton's expressing himself thus, and by the anxiety which he showed to cultivate the friendship of Major Beaumont; and though it might be thought mortifying to my vanity, to find my refusal so little regretted, that mortification was amply repaid by the pleasure of seeing him associate with my father as formerly, and being myself treated as the daughter of his friend only. Until Lord Wilton's attentions had assumed an appearance of tenderness and devotion, unsuited to our relative situations, I had liked his conversation, and esteemed his character; now that he behaved so generously, if I may so term it, he was again in some degree reinstated in my good opinion, and he

spent most of his time at Elmwood; yet, although I could assign no reason for it, I was at times inclined to suspect the sincerity of his professions.

"All was bustle and preparation for our marriage, which, in conformity with the wish of Lord Darnton, was to be followed by rejoicings of various descriptions, to which Major Beaumont and I acceded, only in consequence of our departure being permitted to take place immediately after the ceremony. I had been, with my mother and Miss Jolliffe, occupied in arranging various beautiful pieces of *bijouterie*, which had been presented by my friends, in a boudoir which my parents had just fitted up in the most elegant style for my use. Here were hung the portraits of my father and mother, whilst those of Major Beaumont and myself decorated the drawing-room. Whilst thus occupied I felt some surprise that Major Beaumont did not arrive, he having promised to be with us early. I retired to dress, wondering at his absence, yet doubting not that I should find him in the drawing-room when I entered. I

wished on this day, the last of my single state, to look unusually well in the eyes of one who was so soon to become my husband; I put on a dress and wreath of pink roses, which he had admired, and as I surveyed my figure in the dressing-glass, a glow of gratified vanity mounted to my cheek. I thought I had rarely looked so well, and leaving my room in the hope of meeting him for whom alone I wished to do so, I proceeded to the drawing-room. All were assembled, except Major Beaumont;—'Where can Beaumont be?' said my mother, 'what can have detained him?'—'We will not wait for him,' replied my father, 'he will be with us ere the first course disappears;' and then proceeding to hand Lady Darnton to the eating room, the rest of the party followed. Not only the first but the second course was sent out, and no tidings of Major Beaumont arrived: I could not conceal my uneasiness, although his delinquency was only laughed at by the rest of the party.

"At length dinner was concluded, and I rose to quit the room, that I might in pri-

vacy give way to the fears by which I was oppressed. Miss Jolliffe followed me, and from her I found that on sitting down to dinner, my father had sent a messenger to Lord Orme's, who had returned, saying that Major Beaumont had left him at two o'clock to walk to Elmwood; in consequence of which my father had then dispatched another messenger by the footpath, to see what had detained him. 'I dare say,' continued Miss Jolliffe, 'we shall find that it is some deed of charity, as in the case of the poor woman whom he found nearly dead upon the road.' I shook my head mournfully—the footpath between Lord Orme's and Elmwood was much nearer, but it was a very secluded and somewhat difficult road, lying through a romantic and almost trackless glen, where it was rare to meet with any one. With each moment my alarm increased, until my agita-became almost beyond control. Miss Jolliffe, who had through life sympathised in all my trivial distresses, now wept with me, though she assured me there was no cause for uneasiness. Whilst endeavouring to give me spirits, we heard the trampling of many feet—they ap-

proached nearer—no voice was heard! In an agony of alarm I rushed forward, and encountered—oh! do I live to say it?—the body of my betrothed husband, covered with blood! I gazed upon the pale and disfigured corpse in wild affright—I threw myself upon it, and found it cold as ice, and stiff, and covered with clotted gore; I felt that he was dead—I shrieked not—I spoke not—I knew nothing more that passed then, nor for months!

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"I recollect waking as from a long and frightful dream, and seeing my beloved mother seated by my bed; I softly whispered 'Mother, dearest mother!' and in an instant felt her warm embrace, whilst her tears fell upon my cheeks. 'Thank God, my child knows me once more!' she said, whilst in murmuring accents I replied, 'Knows you!—could I ever forget you?'

"At this moment Dr. Moffatt entered, and feeling my pulse, begged that I might be kept perfectly quiet. I felt no inclination to talk, but lay for some hours in a kind of half slum-

ber. At length I endeavoured to recal the past to my mind, but all seemed confusion; nothing could I remember distinctly, until in one moment the horrid sight I had beheld, and which had deprived me of my senses, returned in all its vivid colouring to my memory;—I thought I again beheld it, and shrieking aloud, 'Beaumont, my beloved Beaumont, who hath done this foul deed?' I once more lost all recollection. My delirium returned with violence, and my parents' newly-awakened hopes were dashed to the ground.

"In a few days I again had a lucid interval, and thus I continued for two or three weeks, occasionally delirious, but at other times knowing those around me; each fit of delirium becoming shorter and less violent than the preceding one, until I sank into a state of calm and melancholy abstraction, apparently insensible to all that passed around me. By degrees, however, I evinced a sense of affectionate gratitude towards my friends and appeared as if wishful to recall something to my remembrance, without having the power to do so. I remember that when I endeavoured

to collect and arrange my thoughts, they seemed to be in a state of complete chaos, for an instant some horrible phantasmagoria of I knew not what appeared to my mind's eye, but ere I could ascertain its nature it was obliterated, and another supplied its place; at length, however, my ideas began to gain a more distinct form, though not sufficiently so to admit of my expressing their nature. I was aware that my senses had fled their seat, and I was fearful that I had not then sufficiently regained them to be able to make my feelings understood, I therefore remained apparently deep in thought, and entirely silent. On one occasion my mother ventured to speak to me of Major Beaumont; I started at his name—he appeared to my memory in an instant as I first beheld him, and as quickly was that figure replaced by his bleeding corpse; I shuddered, and placed my hands over my face—I looked up, and every trace of him had escaped my memory. I once more sunk into a state of listless inattention to all that was said around—yet I now recall those moments and ideas to my mind in their most vivid

colours. How to account for this I know not, but so it is.

At length, in the hope of rousing me from the alarming state into which I had fallen, a fearful experiment was decided upon. I was led one day into my boudoir—that room in which were placed so many elegancies received by me from various friends, on account of my intended marriage. The portraits of my father and mother were removed, and those of Major Beaumont and myself substituted. I took no notice of any thing around; I was seated on a couch, opposite the pictures, but fixing my eyes upon the carpet, I appeared lost in my own melancholy reveries. At length Miss Jolliffe addressed my mother; my own name, united with that of a likeness caught my ear; and looking at the speaker, I involuntarily turned my eyes in the direction of hers, when I saw what I believed to be the real living Beaumont, my affianced husband, before me! With a loud shriek I sprung forward, but ere I reached the portrait I should have fallen to the ground, had not Dr. Moffatt caught me in his arms.

I was seized with strong convulsive affections, and my life was again despaired of; but though my bodily strength seemed fast declining, my reason, through the blessing of divine Providence, gradually regained its power, and when a favourable turn took place in the nature of my complaint, my mind still continued slowly to improve, so that by the time I was out of danger, it had nearly recovered its tone. I now begged to be informed of all that had transpired relative to the murder of my beloved Beaumont, for that I had beheld his murdered body I had a perfect recollection. To my utter surprise I found that eight months had elapsed since that day so fatal to my every hope of happiness. By degrees only was I informed of all that had occurred.

"When my father found that Major Beaumont was actually dead, and that I was insensible, his and my mother's distresses were beyond expression. In vain was I bled and blistered; I remained in utter unconsciousness of all around me, whilst alternately seized with fits of violent delirium or gloomy silence. An inquest had

been held upon the remains of my murdered Beaumont—for murdered I firmly believed him to be, although appearances were such that, added to the evidence of his valet, the verdict given was, that he had committed suicide in a temporary fit of insanity. The evidence of the valet stated that his master was frequently subject to fits of melancholy, of which he alone was aware; since ere he went into company he generally removed every trace of it by a large dose of laudanum; that latterly he had more than once entered the room, and seen him wringing his hands in bitter agony, and calling out to heaven to forgive him, wishing he had never known his beloved Mary, or known her earlier.

"Added to this extraordinary evidence, was one still stronger—that of a note found on his person, and addressed to me, accusing himself in the most energetic, though somewhat incoherent terms, with criminality, in having dared to propose himself to me as a lover; he having been privately married to a lovely young girl when in Ireland several years before; but that

as she knew him not by his own name, she could not make any claim; yet feeling as he did, that in the eye of heaven she was his wife, his misery was almost too great to be borne, for whilst honour bade him renounce me, love overpowered every virtuous resolution, and chained him in adamantine fetters to his criminal engagement with me. The hours spent out of my society, he said, were those of a miserable wretch, ever fearful that some discovery, (though from what source he could not divine, would yet dash the cup of happiness from his lips. 'Thus,' he continued, 'I have struggled on from hour to hour, from day to day, unsuspected by any one; and to-morrow, the prize which is dearer to me than all the world contains may be mine—may be—shall I dare to defile the purity of one so nearly allied to an angel as Mary Elmwood?—No—the goal which I have looked to as the summit of earthly bliss is at hand, but conscience arrests my further progress. I dare not proceed one step more. Mary, I cannot live and resign you—therefore I die. When you receive this I shall be no more—pity and forgive me!'

"Such, at length, I was informed was the purport of the letter addressed to me. It was by degrees only that I heard all the circumstances I have related; but when I had done so, I demanded to see the letter—it was given to me by my father. With tearful eyes and trembling hands, I beheld the well-known characters of my affianced husband. Although convinced in my own mind that some extraordinary plan had been laid, and, alas! but too successfully, for causing my beloved Beaumont to be supposed guilty of suicide; yet when I held the letter, addressed to myself, in my hands, I could not but admit that the writing seemed to be his, but still it only *seemed* so. 'Did you,' said I to my parents, 'believe the tale this letter tells?' 'Could we do otherwise, my dearest Mary; no motive could be assigned for any one else committing so dreadful a crime; the unfortunate young man appeared to have no enemy but himself; and as his watch and purse were found upon him, plunder was not the inducement. A pistol, his own pistol, evidently recently discharged, was lying close to him—

the evidence, my Mary, was quite complete even without that of his present as well as former valet, who gave additional information as to the state of his mind.' Until that moment I had sat comparatively calm and tranquil, but then starting wildly from my seat, I exclaimed, 'Oh, Beaumont—loved—murdered Beaumont!—why was she who alone would have braved the world in defence of your character, deprived of her senses at such a time?'

"My parents and Miss Jolliffe seeing the state of excitement I was in, were once more alarmed for my intellects; but telling them I was in full possession of my faculties, I added, 'This letter,' holding it in my hand, 'is a forgery, so cunningly performed, that no eye but mine could have discerned it; but that it is a forgery, I would pledge my life. That being admitted, the rest is plain; though who could have committed so fearful a crime, and for what purpose, is yet to be discovered.' I perceived that my friends thought I was deceiving myself, though conceiving that such a belief might lessen the weight of misery which overwhelmed

me, they did not attempt to remove it. Although on first looking at the letter addressed to me, I had for a moment suspected it to be written by Major Beaumont, from the strong resemblance it bore to his writing, yet on comparing it with various letters of his, I discovered such trivial differences as more fully confirmed me in the belief of its being a forgery. I endeavoured to bring others to the same conviction; but my father, I saw, attributed these differences to the state of mind in which the last letter was written, rather than to any other cause; and Miss Jolliffe, though inclined to the same opinion as myself, doubted, because she could see no cause for the commission of murder, since his death could benefit no one, and his life had been such, she believed, as to leave him without an enemy. To this I fully assented, but it shook not the conviction of my own mind; and I inwardly determined from that period to devote my time and thoughts to the discovery of the murderer, and the restoration of Major Beaumont's character. My health and spirits were both fled, I believed, for ever; and my understanding,

though rapidly recovering its tone, was yet not restored to that strength which would enable me to cope with the prejudice of the world, with no other evidence in favour of my opinion than my own conviction that the letter was forged. On inquiry, I found that my lamented Beaumont's valet had quitted England immediately after his master's funeral, though to what part of the continent he had gone no one knew. Under these circumstances, I determined to institute no further immediate inquiries into the particulars attending his mysterious death; but at the same time inwardly to note every word or look that should appear calculated to throw any light upon the subject. But although I spoke not upon it, so entirely did this melancholy topic occupy my thoughts, that I became more abstracted than before.

"Months rolled on, and still I showed no symptom of returning interest in any thing around me; consequently, my parents strongly urged me to consent to, what they had frequently proposed, a tour of some length, in the hope that change of scene might prove advan-

tageous to my health and spirits. I had hitherto shown so strong a repugnance to the idea of quitting Elmwood (since I had believed that there I should eventually find a clue to the murderer of my betrothed Beaumont), that my mother was most agreeably surprised by my quiet acquiescence in her repeated wish to that effect; but time and place seemed now to become indifferent to me, for I met with no circumstance to lead to such a discovery as I looked for; but although I assented to the desire of my parents, it was with a conviction that I had 'that within' which would preclude the possibility of improved health or spirits.

"After quitting Elmwood, we visited various parts of England and Wales, remaining nearly twelve months from home. On our return, I resumed my old habit of wandering alone in the precincts of that spot in which the body of my beloved Beaumont had been found; where in vain I ruminated on every possible circumstance which could have led to so lamentable a catastrophe. A kind of indistinct suspicion had at times arisen in my mind of one individual; but as I

could assign no sufficient cause for such an idea, I confined it within the limits of my own bosom. Were I to have hinted it to any one, I should have feared that my intellects might still have been thought to wander—indeed, there were moments when I apprehended such to be the case myself, and endeavoured to chase the suspicion from my mind, as if it were suggested by some fiend. Wrapped up in my own melancholy musings, and in forming plans for succeeding in the great object of my anxiety, I perceived not the change which had taken place in my mother's health. My sorrow had been too selfish to note that of those around me, until roused to observation by a remark of Miss Jolliffe's on my mother's altered appearance. I looked at her with awakened interest, and beheld with alarm that form which, when in health was finely rounded, now attenuated by anxiety and sorrow. Her hollow cheeks appeared flushed with fever; never a strong constitution, my beloved mother had been unable to bear up against the afflictions with which she was beset; the dreadful event which had so long bereaved me

of my senses, and the state of melancholy in which I remained after their restoration, had quite overpowered her; and unable longer to contend with her sorrows, her health and spirits appeared equally to sink under them. Two years had passed since that fearful day, which had seen the destruction of my happiness, when I first observed the change in my mother's appearance. From that moment I resolved to become a new creature; throwing myself into her arms, I besought her forgiveness for the selfishness I had evinced in cherishing my own grief to the destruction of her health and happiness. I promised to exert myself to endeavour to make her and my father happy, and to show a sense of gratitude to the Almighty for the blessings with which I was still surrounded. My mother, with tears of joy, blessed me; and assured me, that could she see me once more restored to tranquillity she should be quite well.

"I adhered to the resolution I had formed, and though, when in my own chamber, I still indulged in melancholy reveries, I became with

my family once more a tolerably cheerful companion. At the request of my father, I agreed to enter into the society of our own friends, when they visited Elmwood, though I begged to be excused going out. Satisfied with this concession on my part, Elmwood once more became the hospitable resort of our various connexions and friends. It was indeed a painful effort for me to enter again into society, but I was rewarded for it by perceiving how much I gratified my dearest parents, who, seeing their daughter comparatively happy and cheerful, guessed not the hours she still spent in weeping.

"Lord Wilton was among the first to visit Elmwood, when its doors were again opened to our friends. My father appeared more attached to him than ever, and my mother frequently observed that he was one of the few men whose agreeable qualities increased rather than diminished with their years. Indeed I could not be surprised that they were daily more and more pleased with him, since in addition to his varied talents and elegant manners, was an attention to their wishes and deference to their

opinions, peculiarly calculated to win upon any one. To me, Lord Wilton was properly attentive, although never obtrusively so; I had no opportunity of being particularly cold or distant towards him, because he shewed me no attention beyond what I might claim as daughter of the master of the mansion; but notwithstanding I admitted his agreeable qualities, I felt an inward repugnance towards his society, for which it would have been difficult for me to account.

"Thus some months of comparative comfort were passed by my father and mother, nay, even by myself, until we were all again thrown into a state of the greatest grief, by my dear mother having taken a severe cold, which settled upon her chest, and, in a few days, deprived her of life, and me of the best and tenderest of parents.

"I must drop a veil over the sufferings of my father and self: they were deep and violent, but, through the mercy of Providence, and the unceasing kindness and sympathy of Miss Jol-

life, I was enabled to bear up under this severe stroke, and in some degree to console my remaining parent. Once more we left Elmwood, and in change of scene derived as much benefit as we could expect. After an absence of six months we returned to our home, where we deeply felt the loss we had sustained.

"We were visited by various friends and connexions, but Lord Wilton alone seemed endued with power to amuse or interest my father. Seeing of how much service his society was, and that his presence never failed to throw a gleam of pleasure over the countenance of my parent, I always rejoiced in his visits, although I still felt an inward dislike to him, which neither his fascinating manners, nor amusing conversation could overcome; but as on my father's account I did not hesitate expressing myself pleased with his visits, no one was aware how far they were from agreeable to myself.

"I was shocked to see the alteration, which, during a short period, had taken place in my father; he was become a prematurely old man,

and I could not look at him without an apprehension that I should ere long be without a parent.

"One day I was seated beside him, while he was occupied in writing; when he had concluded, he arose, and kissing my cheek, addressed me as follows. 'My dearest Mary, more than three years have elapsed since you were deprived of your destined husband, you have mourned his loss long and deeply; we have since sustained a severe trial in the death of your inestimable mother, and I, my beloved child, feel that I am following her rapidly to the grave. Weep not for me, my love! on your account alone do I regret the state of my health; and could I but have the gratification of leaving you under the care and protection of a worthy husband, I feel that I could die, not only contented, but grateful for my release. To leave you alone and unprotected, will, I own, cause death to be appalling to me. For my sake then, dearest Mary, if not for your own, let me entreat you to make one of the many men who love you happy, ere I die.' Sobbing

as I threw my arms around his neck, I replied, 'Happy, dearest father! Can marrying one so utterly heartless, spiritless, and miserable as myself, contribute to the happiness of any one? Oh! no, no—it cannot be! Suffer me to devote every thought, every moment of my life, towards your comfort, and perhaps, by my unceasing efforts, your health may be restored; or if unhappily that should not be the case, I will pray to the sovereign disposer of all human events, to remove me with you.'

"'Mary,' replied my father, mournfully, 'I shall never recover my health; I wished not to give you unnecessary pain, but the awful fiat is passed; I have an inward complaint which I know to be incurable, and which must very soon be fatal. Nothing would tend to ease my dying hours so much, as to leave you under the protection of an honourable man. There are many who love you, but none I believe so constantly, so ardently, as Lord Wilton.'

"'Lord Wilton!' exclaimed I, rousing from my grief in utter astonishment; 'did he not say

I had conferred a favour upon him in refusing his proffered hand, since a diplomatist ought not to think of marriage.'

"'He did, my child; but he has long since confessed to me that such were not his real feelings, though his love for you was so sincere, and so utterly removed from selfishness, that when he found you were attached to another, he assumed that satisfaction at the result, to prevent any obstacle on my part, as he knew how much I had wished his union with you.'

"'My dear father, it grieves me deeply to refuse any wish of yours, but indeed I cannot marry; I never more can love any one.'

"'So you now believe, my child, but I trust it will prove otherwise; all I at present request of you, Mary, is not utterly to refuse acceding to my entreaty—think upon what has passed, recollect that you have the power of extracting every thorn from the death-bed of a parent, who loves you beyond expression.' Then tenderly kissing and pressing me in his arms, my father quitted me. I indulged myself in a

violent flood of tears, in which state I was found by Miss Jolliffe, who eagerly inquired the cause of my deep affliction. I relieved my oppressed heart, by making her a participator in my sorrows; when I found that she before knew all of which I had been informed by my father, and entirely agreed with him as to the eligibility of a union with Lord Wilton.

"'Even should I survive my dear father,' said I, 'surely whilst my brother lives I cannot want a home or a protector.'—'You forget, my dear Mary,' replied Miss Jolliffe, 'that your brother's wife is by no means calculated to prove an agreeable companion for you now, since her unbounded gaiety would be too great a contrast to your present state of spirits; this alone would prevent his house proving a desirable home; and young, lovely, and rich, as you will be, you will become a point of attraction to all the single men in the kingdom; therefore, I must acknowledge, I should rejoice to hear that you would endeavour to conform to Mr. Elmwood's wish.'

"Finding that Miss Jolliffe was inclined to

espouse my father's cause so strongly, I dropped the painful subject, and retired to revolve in my own room all that had passed. From this period, my father and Miss Jolliffe availed themselves of every opportunity of prosecuting the plan they had in view, by presenting Lord Wilton in his most favourable points before me. But where alone I was vulnerable, was the declining health and spirits of my beloved parent; I. saw that he would indeed be torn from me ere long; he had told me that I could make the bed of death easy to him, and I had refused to do so! I prayed for assistance, for support from above, and I arose from my knees resolved to sacrifice my own feelings and wishes, if by so doing I could make my father happy. Fearful lest my resolution should fail, I flew to him, and throwing myself into his arms, I said that I had determined to endeavour to obey his wish of seeing me married to Lord Wilton; but that I must be allowed three months to bring my mind into a proper train for receiving his addresses; at the expiration of which time, should I not have succeeded, I

must be allowed to decline them; but should I, on the contrary, be enabled to school myself into the idea of becoming a wife, preparations might immediately be made for our nuptials.

"With tears of joy my dear father thanked me for the sacrifice I was making of my own feelings to his wishes, and pressing me in his arms, invoked blessings on my head. Lord Wilton, who was told of the hope I had held out, requested to be allowed to thank me for it. I received him alone—he advanced towards me with rapture in his countenance—I allowed him to touch my hand with his lips, although an involuntary shudder passed through my frame as he did so; I then drew it calmly from him, and interrupting his thanks, said, 'Hold, my lord, no gratitude is due to me from you; I have promised, in conformity with the wishes of my father, to endeavour to bring my feelings into such subjection, as may enable me to receive you as my future husband.'—I again shuddered as I uttered these words—'If I succeed, I promise your Lordship to do my duty to the best of my ability, but my affections are

buried in the grave of'—I could not utter the name, it seemed to be profanation to do so in the presence of another admirer; hesitating a moment, I proceeded, 'I never can love again; esteem is all I dare give you reason to expect, even should I be able to decide in favour of your suit; if, on the contrary, I find at the termination of the stipulated three months, that my stubborn heart cannot be brought into the necessary subjection, your lordship must consider me totally at liberty; on these terms I consent to our meeting as often as may be agreeable to you to come to Elmwood, but from this day, until three months are expired, no word or look expressive of more than common friendship and civility, must pass between us.'

"As I spoke, an air of mortification and disappointment was visible in his lordship, but quickly rallying, he thanked me in the most energetic language, for my condescension and kindness; assuring me he lived but for me, and should be the happiest of human beings, if eventually I should honour him with my hand; satisfied with my esteem he should claim no

warmer feeling on my part. These preliminaries being arranged, I rose to quit the apartment, when he again offered to take my hand; but drawing back, I begged to be excused from receiving any testimonials of affection, beyond those of any other visitor at the house. His lordship, biting his nether lip, then coldly bowed, and opening the door I left him. What an interview between two lovers! Oh, no, no! we were not, we could not be lovers! With an almost bursting heart I flew to my room, when, shutting myself in, I gave way to my overcharged feelings in a flood of tears.

The sacrifice I purposed making of my own feelings would be perfectly unavailing, I knew, unless I was enabled to hide the conflict I endured from my dearest father. I therefore assumed as cheerful a demeanour as it was possible for me to do, and spent less time alone than had been my wont, for in these hours only I could indulge in mental retrospection, on the many virtues of my murdered lover; now those very virtues seemed to reproach me for the line of conduct which filial affection had induced me to adopt. Instead of sitting for hours me-

ditating on one subject, I became so restless as rarely to remain five minutes stationary. Worlds would I have given, had I possessed them, to make my father's last moments easy; but I shrunk from an engagement with Lord Wilton, with a feeling of disgust almost amounting to horror. To relieve me from his presence, and likewise to amuse my mind, I proposed that the time which must intervene ere my decision was positively made, should be passed in travelling; to this proposition my father readily assented, though ere that period had elapsed, he expressed a wish to return home. His rapidly-changing appearance alarmed Miss Jolliffe and myself. There was indeed cause for apprehension, as the disease, from which he had been suffering during many months, soon terminated fatally. A very few days after our arrival at Elmwood, my beloved parent expired in my arms; he died happy, in the belief, than an union would take place between Lord Wilton and myself, and invoking blessings on my head. At that period I was truly thankful that I had assented to his wishes.

In seeing him resign his breath in perfect confidence of his daughter's future comfort, I was fully rewarded for the sacrifice I purposed making; for at that moment I inwardly resolved that no indulgence of my own wayward heart, should cause me to act contrary to his ardent wish.

"Although so long led to expect a fatal termination to my father's illness, when the blow which deprived me of my last parent arrived, I nearly sunk under the stroke. I was for some weeks confined to my bed; Lord Wilton had been sent for at my father's desire, but although he set out instantly, he arrived too late to have an interview with his friend. I requested to be excused seeing him at that time, and as I was afterwards so extremely ill, it was impossible for me to do so. Until assured my health was in an improving state, his Lordship remained in the neighbourhood; but upon my being declared out of danger, he begged Miss Jolliffe to entreat me to see him for a few minutes, ere he returned to town, where his diplomatic situation made it requisite he should

be. I assured Miss Jolliffe I was quite unable to see him, and requested that he would be generous enough not to ask me to do so, until three months from my fathers death, at the expiration of which time I should be prepared to receive him as my future husband, should he still wish for the hand of one who had no heart to give. Miss Jolliffe told me that he appeared deeply disappointed, when she informed him that I declined seeing him, but on the delivery of the remainder of the message, he had expressed the most unqualified gratitude and delight, since it was the first time I had allowed myself to be considered under an engagement to him; all I had before held out to him being merely a distant hope that such might eventually be the case. He requested permission to correspond with me, which I thought that I could not refuse under present circumstances.

"That very day, Lord Wilton set out for town, and I instantaneously felt as if a load was removed from my oppressed heart. I was soon able to wander once more through

those rooms which were become so solitary and mournful, and where formerly cheerful and affectionate countenances gleamed on me wherever I passed. If I accidentally encountered any of the old servants, the stealthy step and mournful look reminded me, if I could otherwise have forgotten it, that I alone remained of that once cheerful, happy family. Lord Wilton's letters were written with an apparent delicacy of feeling towards me, which was peculiarly pleasing—his style was nervous, yet elegant—an affectionate respect and deference were visible in every line, which would have ensured him the gratitude, if not affection, of any woman but myself. Whilst I admitted all this, I still felt that inward repugnance towards him, which I vainly attempted to account for, or to combat.

"Too soon the time elapsed which I had fixed should expire ere our meeting. I received a letter from him assuring me of the delight with which he anticipated seeing me the following day. Far from participating in that pleasure, I retired to weep in my own apartment—to read for the last time the letters of my lamented

Beaumont—to revolve in my mind all the events of that dreadful day which had so awfully separated us—and then endeavour, as far as might be possible, to erase them from my memory.

"After a day thus spent, it was natural that my night should be more disturbed than usual. Having made many ineffectual efforts to sleep, I arose, paced my chamber, again read that letter found on the person of Beaumont; as I read, my eye for the first time *fancied* a resemblance between some of the characters and the hand of Lord Wilton—for an instant an overpowering sickness came o'er me—I exerted every nerve to rouse from this state, and with success; but, on again examining the writing, the resemblance, if there were any, appeared even to my morbid feelings, too trifling to admit of notice. I retired once more to bed, and towards morning fell into a confused slumber, in which I beheld myself in a splendid apartment, attired in bridal array. My father and mother, with many friends, were standing around me—my parents were in all that maturity of health and beauty which had adorned

them a few years before. The Bishop of —— stood at a table, with an open book before him. 'Where,' said my father, 'is the bridegroom?'

"At this instant, Lord Wilton, whom I had not before seen, advanced, and taking my hand, whilst I recoiled from his touch, he led me towards the altar, when a hollow voice whispered in my ear, 'Wed not that man, he is a murderer!' I turned in dismay, but saw no one. I attempted to disengage my hand (which Lord Wilton forcibly detained), but all my efforts were unavailing. The ceremony proceeded, and we were declared man and wife. Lord Wilton led me towards my parents, when a ghastly figure intervened, and pointing towards his lordship, in the voice of Beaumont, exclaimed, 'Is this thy love, Mary? Dost thou wed my murderer?' In vain did I attempt to speak or move, my feet were rooted to the floor, my tongue clove to my mouth with horror.

"At length I awoke—my forehead was bedewed with cold drops of agony—the circulation was nearly stopped in my veins—I knew it was but a dream, but for kingdoms I would

not thus have dreamt again. I arose, pale, agitated, miserable. My dream was easily accounted for, by the previous state of my mind; yet the impression it made upon me was so deep that I could scarcely shake off the conviction that it was meant to warn me from marrying Lord Wilton. Thus do our own excited feelings frequently lead us to form ideas of supernatural agency, when the events, which appear in our dreams to have occurred, may almost always be traced to a train of thoughts which has preceded them.

"I determined, at length, to unbosom myself to Miss Jolliffe. When I did so, she listened to me with grief, almost amounting to horror; not that for an instant she suspected Lord Wilton of criminality, but that I should have accepted his addresses whilst such suspicions had a place in my breast. In vain I asserted that I did not really suspect him of committing so horrible a crime, but that at times these and other wayward fancies still came o'er me, and were, I doubted not, the effect of a mind weakened by former suffering.

Miss Jolliffe mournfully shook her head, and said, 'Whatever the cause may be, dearest Mary, while subject to these nervous fancies, you must not think of marrying Lord Wilton. Deeply do I now regret that I ever urged your acceptance of his proposals, which I was induced to do from the high opinion I have always entertained of his lordship's character, and the consequent conviction that an union with him would eventually tend as much to your own happiness, as towards soothing the last hours of your excellent father; but since I now find that you have a decided repugnance to Lord Wilton, instead of what I believed to be merely that indifference which was the natural consequence of your sad bereavement; I feel it my duty to urge you instantly to put a stop to the hope he has formed of your ever becoming his. Do not delay writing to him, I entreat you, and assure him of the impossibility of bringing your feelings into that calm and tranquil state which is requisite to enable you to perform your duty as his wife.'

'To this I replied, 'I purpose seeing Lord

Wilton, and personally explaining the state of my mind.' I spoke with determination, but I did not explain to Miss Jolliffe the wild and romantic plan which had suggested itself to my (I am now inclined to think) still somewhat distempered imagination. I immediately gave orders that Lord Wilton should, on his arrival at Elmwood, be shewn into my boudoir. This was a room which I never myself entered, unless from a wish to indulge in melancholy recollections, and into which no stranger had been admitted since the death of Major Beaumont. Miss Jolliffe uttered an exclamation of surprise, but observing, no doubt, the unusually excited state of my feelings, offered no opposition to my wishes.

"When his lordship was announced, he appeared to be suffering a momentary emotion of sorrow for the loss of that friend who had never ceased to regard him with affection, but this was rapidly displaced by the pleasure he seemed to experience at again beholding me: he expressed the most lively gratification at seeing me look so well. I do not doubt my cheeks

were flushed, and my eyes sparkling from the state of excitement in which I then was.

"Without replying I involuntarily glanced my eyes upon that portrait which had been taken ere I had known illness or sorrow; his lordship's took the same direction, and in so doing, encountered the resemblance of Major Beaumont; he instantly became pale as death —his lips trembled, and his whole frame seemed to shake with agitation. 'Are you ill, my lord?' I asked with some difficulty; when, by a violent effort he appeared to overcome his emotion, and saying that he was somewhat oppressed by the heat, withdrew to the window. In a few moments he resumed his seat, sedulously turning from the pictures. 'That portrait at which you were looking,' said I, trembling with agitation, 'is very like Major Beaumont; does not your lordship think so?' With extreme difficulty I uttered the words; it was the first time since the dreadful deed was done that I had mentioned that name in Lord Wilton's presence. 'Extremely!' he replied, but without again glancing his eye towards it. 'I

have a small portrait, still more strongly resembling him,' said I, opening a *portefeuille*, and placing before him with trembling hands, a sketch of my beloved Beaumont, as I had been told he was found lying in the glen, of which I had taken a correct view, and I had that morning added the slight outline of the figure of a man retreating through the underwood with seemingly stealthy steps. 'This,' said I, almost choking with emotion, 'is the unfortunate murdered Beaumont.' Lord Wilton's eyes seemed glued to the paper—his features appeared almost convulsed with horror, whilst his varying colour and clenched hands shewed still more the intensity of his internal agony. 'Murdered! — Miss Elmwood?' at length he murmured, in low and hollow tones. 'Yes, murdered!—*basely, foully murdered!*' As I spoke these words he started forward, staggered two or three paces, and whilst a deep groan burst from his bosom, rushed from the room.

" Overpowered by the excitement of my own overwrought feelings, and by the conviction that

the murderer was at length made manifest, I fell into violent hysterics, from which my deeply sympathising friend could not recover me until some hours had elapsed. Then, though weak and enervated, I became comparatively composed and tranquil, and looked upon the extraordinary exertions I had made, and the agitating scene that had passed, as a painful dream; but Miss Jolliffe soon assured me of its reality, by saying, 'That Lord Wilton is in some way implicated in the death of our lamented friend, after what has taken place, I can no longer doubt;—how grateful, my dearest Mary, ought we to be to a kind Providence, for having discovered the criminal, and for inspiring you with such a repugnance towards a man so generally admired and esteemed, as to prevent the fulfilment of your engagement: this is surely an interposition of heaven itself, to expose guilt and protect innocence.'

"Although, in our opinions, it was most plainly manifest that Lord Wilton had either committed the direful crime of murder, or excited some other person to do so; we had no evidence

to bring forward that could possibly convict him. To accuse a man of his high rank and unblemished character, on suspicion only, was out of the question. We knew not what steps to pursue. At one moment I proposed sending express for my brother, but I hesitated doing so, because I knew him to be so plain a matter-of-fact person, without a particle of romance, imagination, or even suspicion in his disposition, that he would most probably attribute the whole chain of evidence which we had to submit to him, to the whims and fantasies of my morbid state of nerves; or if he gave any credence to our account of Lord Wilton's extraordinary conduct he would say it arose from mortified pride and affection, at seeing himself suspected of such fearful guilt by a woman whom he had so long ardently loved. Thus I believed my brother (who is unwilling to admit the criminality, even of those acts which are committed before his eyes, and anxious rather to accuse himself of misconception than others of error) would reason. Miss Jolliffe felt unequal to advise in such an emergency; for she

admitted that though the impression on her own mind of Lord Wilton's guilt was such as no subsequent event could remove, she should not be able to produce such evidence as would cause the same conviction in any one who had not seen him as she had done. Thus, unable to determine upon any mode of proceeding, the evening wore away.

"The following morning, at an early hour, the dreadful tidings arrived that Lord Wilton had destroyed himself! His lordship's steward, knowing the intimacy that subsisted between the families, came to inform Miss Jolliffe of the circumstance, and to deliver a letter addressed to me. It appeared that immediately upon quitting me the preceding day, he had rushed to the stable, mounted his horse, and gallopped home, where he instantly shut himself up in his library, ordering no one to come near him until he rung the bell: his man asked him if he would dine at home, to which he replied in a voice of thunder, 'No—begone!' Late in the evening his old housekeeper ventured to the door to inquire if he would not take any refreshment, when he

told her to send some tea, but not again to disturb him, as he had business which would occupy him all night. As this was not unusual with him, the servants went to rest without any feeling of alarm; but his valet, who slept in that wing of the castle in which the library was situated, hearing a pistol-shot about five in the morning, started up in affright, and proceeded to his master's room, whom he found already dead, with a recently-discharged pistol by his side, and on the table a packet directed to me.

"I was much shocked at this dreadful termination to the existence of a man, whom during the greatest part of my life I had been accustomed to look up to with admiration and respect; and although, had he lived, my duty to the memory of my ever-lamented Beaumont would have led me to endeavour to convict him of murder, yet that I should be, though unintentionally, the cause of his rushing into the presence of his Maker, with all his unrepented crimes on his head, and, above all, that most heinous one of suicide, overwhelmed me with

horror and dismay. The letter addressed to me by Lord Wilton was as follows:

"'When Miss Elmwood receives this, he who writes it will be no more. I could commit crime, but I cannot bear to be suspected of it, and will not live to be stigmatized as a murderer! You are the *beacon* which has lighted me to destruction! For your sake I became a criminal, and yours is the hand which drives me to suicide! This is just—for I dashed the cup of happiness untasted from your lips. But, think you, I have quaffed its contents myself? Oh, no!—when statesmen have listened enraptured to what I uttered—when the roof of the senate-house has shaken with the applause I received—when the journals have burst forth almost unanimously in eulogy of the gifted orator, who was one day to become the saviour of his country—then did this admired and envied being retire into his closet, and feel that he was indeed a wretch—a guilty, an accursed creature! Not a day—not an hour has passed since the

commission of that fatal crime, in which I have not trembled lest the first strange foot within my walls should come to drag me to justice. But I must not dilate on my feelings; my time is short, and therefore precious. To you I wish to account for my conduct, ere I put a period to that existence which, had I never known you, might have ended brilliantly, if not happily. You are no doubt aware, that my acquaintance with your father commenced at college; he was somewhat my senior, and bore so high a character that his friendship was an honour to those few who were fortunate enough to obtain it. I took letters of introduction to him, and finding it likely to be advantageous to me, I endeavoured to gain his regard.'

"'From my earliest infancy I had trod the paths of deceit. My father, himself a diplomatist, wished me to become one likewise, and took great pains to teach me what he most excelled in—to conceal my feelings: he could look calm and tranquil whilst his heart writhed with agony, or his temper was suffering from a whirlwind of anger; he taught me, in fact, *not*

to subdue, but to *conceal* my passions. My mother, too—elegant, insinuating, and gay—did her best towards making me an adept in the art of deceit, by instructing me how to deceive my father; and I thought I could not more decidedly evince how much I had profited by their lessons, than by deceiving them both. At Eton I pursued the wild career I had commenced at home, but so cautiously did I act, that few even suspected me. Many of my most flagrant offences being committed under borrowed names, I escaped detection, whilst others received the punishment. I had naturally a retentive memory, with considerable clearness and quickness of perception. I not only learnt with unusual facility, but retained what I learnt; consequently, when any of the boys accused me of participating in some wild exploit, they rarely gained credence, as the tutors said my exercises were a convincing proof that my time had not been mispent. Thus those talents with which I was endowed were, even at that early period of my life, productive of evil, by enabling me to have too much unoccupied

time. When I went to college, I continued to indulge in every species of dissipation and intrigue; whilst so artfully did I conduct myself, that I was universally considered a most exemplary character.

"'My allowance was necessarily very small for my rank, but I contrived by play with two or three rich *parvenus*, who, for their own sakes, kept the transaction a secret, to increase my funds. Notwithstanding this method of obtaining supplies, I was frequently in great want of cash, as it was advisable that I should restrict my gains to such sums as were not likely to be of importance to those of whom I won. It so chanced that I had an object in view on which to expend what, with my limited means, was a considerable sum of money. I knew that Elmwood was nearly of age, on which occasion he would come into possession of a large property; and I determined to endeavour to prevail upon him to play with me, if possible, and to gain from him the sum I wanted—two hundred pounds; taking care never again to attempt leading him into a similar temptation, lest he

should be led to suspect the general propriety of my conduct. I was in the habit of declining every kind of play in company, and declaiming against it, so that they of whom I had won conceived that I had been induced to join them in conformity with their wishes, rather than my own; whilst all others believed I never touched a die, or even a card. In consequence of the plan I had formed, I one day asked a few friends to dine with me, one of whom was your father. We drank more than usual—at least, *they* drank, for under the plea of a headache, I took but little wine.

My friends all retired, except Elmwood, and he seeing me apparently out of spirits tried to cheer me. I told him I had been endeavouring to amuse myself, as a relaxation to my mind after severe study, by teaching myself *picquet*. At this Elmwood laughingly replied, that although he should be considered amongst players to know little of the game, he thought he was equal to becoming my opponent, and challenged me to play. I acceded to his desire; we commenced playing for a trifle, doubling our stakes

as we proceeded; heated with taking an unusual quantity of wine, surprised and somewhat irritated that one who knew nothing of the game should beat him, he was thrown off his guard, whilst I, cool and collected, was constantly on mine—when we parted I had won 1000*l.*! The following morning I called, and found him suffering from a violent feverish headache; I proffered the note he had given me—he refused it—I pressed it upon him, but found him resolute not to receive it—he replied, that he richly deserved to lose it, but the lesson, though a severe one, would be of use through life. 'Then,' said I, tearing the note to atoms as I spoke, 'I am satisfied—I played last night when I saw you become heated and off your guard, to show you how great an advantage even an unpractised performer like myself would have over you, if cool and collected; not for worlds would I have played for half that sum, except as a jest, and in the hope that nothing would ever tempt you again to play for money.'

Elmwood, thanking me warmly, acknowledged himself to have been guilty of great folly, but assured me my lesson should be

a warning to him. Your father's noble candour induced him to relate the circumstance every where, attaching much more credit to me, and blame to himself, than even appeared due. To his father he wrote such an account of the affair as brought me a letter from the old earl, replete with praise, and begging my acceptance of a very valuable breakfast service of plate, whilst Elmwood himself never ceased showering benefits on my head. Thus, my credit was more highly established than ever, both at Cambridge and elsewhere; and I reaped richer fruit from my stratagem than I had dared to expect. You will no doubt be at a loss to account for my returning the draft to Mr. Elmwood, after having expressed so great an anxiety to win. The fact was this: I sat down, as I have stated, with an intention of gaining two hundred pounds; but avarice, getting the better of prudence, led me to take advantage of Elmwood's unguarded situation, and I continued to urge him on until exhilarated by my success, I found myself the winner of a very large sum. Ere I arose from my pillow the following morning, I saw the

transaction as it would appear to the world. If I retained my ill-gotten gains, I must bid adieu to that character which I had so artfully acquired; if, on the contrary, I returned them, my character would stand higher than ever, and I should most probably obtain over the mind of Elmwood an influence which might afterwards prove highly advantageous. Such were the motives by which my conduct was actuated, and the event proved what I expected. From that period, your father felt and expressed the most unbounded friendship for me; his purse was ever at my command; but I carefully avoided making use of it, excepting in such cases as would admit of my assigning a plausible reason for the demand, and thus my irregularities remained unsuspected. Mr. Elmwood left college, and though we corresponded constantly, we did not again meet until I attended his marriage with your lovely mother. I envied him his prospect of felicity; yet I felt that I was both by nature and education unfitted for the calm and tranquil pleasures of life. My track was marked out—the goal I fixed my eye upon

was political celebrity; though millions should bleed—though my country should be ruined—so that I became its helmsman—I cared not. No mistress would I court but ambition! Thus, having chosen my path to eminence, I steadily and successfully pursued its course.

"'Mr. Elmwood and I still occasionally met in town, at those periods when the fashionable world usually congregated; but deeply absorbed as I was by political intrigues, I had little time to devote to private friendship, and being despatched to a foreign court, as an ambassador, where I remained several years, our intercourse entirely ceased.

"'On my return to England, I was placed in a post of eminence and responsibility in the government, which entirely occupied my time and thoughts. Soon after this period, a change in the ministry took place, and for the first time since the death of my parents, I proceeded to Wilton Castle. The almost ruinous state in which I found this mansion of my forefathers, mortified me exceedingly, since I had not the power of remedying it; for the splendid style in

which I had lived whilst on the embassy abroad, and afterwards in London, left me quite as poor as when I originally commenced my political career.

"'Finding myself within a few miles of Elmwood Park, the friendship between its owner and myself, which had been interrupted rather than broken, was renewed. You were at that time still a child, but beautiful as a Houri, and bewitching as beautiful! How often have I watched the changeful expression of that lovely countenance, whilst supposed to be wrapt in contemplations of the utmost importance to the welfare of the state!

"'Your father's estimation of me was such, that I doubted not having his approval, should I afterwards pay my addresses to you, which even then I thought of doing, though I resolved to keep my intentions within my own bosom, until a proper period should arrive in which to announce my wishes. A few months only elapsed ere I was (with the rest of my party) reinstated in the situation I before held. Ambition once more became my mistress, and left no time for

softer thoughts. My dream of love was over! Four years expired before I again beheld you, although your father and myself continued each spring to meet in town. At this juncture, I revisited Wilton Castle, which I found more dilapidated than ever; and as I viewed its dismantled towers and mouldering walls, and felt that this ancient seat of one of England's oldest families would soon be utterly in ruins, I inwardly exclaimed, 'Matrimony can alone save it from destruction.' At that instant, the recollection of the daughter of my friend, as I had last seen her, in all the grace and loveliness of childhood, arose fresh in my mind. I delayed not to visit Elmwood, where I beheld you grown into such surpassing beauty as far outshone my utmost expectation. From that moment I became the slave of a passion, fervent as ever glowed in Asiatic bosom. No longer was ambition the moving principle of my being—love reigned in my heart triumphant over every other feeling; but for the first time becoming diffident of my power to please, I guarded my secret from all eyes. I strove by every means in my

power to appear agreeable to you, without causing you to suspect my aim; and an adept in deceit, I easily succeeded in my attempt. Your introduction at court was followed by the admiration you deserved-- crowds of adorers waited upon your footsteps, but to all the beautiful heiress seemed alike indifferent; and often did my heart throb with ecstacy to find my society preferred to that of younger and gayer men. Lover after lover was dismissed, and I (as your father's friend, I was aware) still met with a kind reception. At length, you appeared to treat me with coldness and constraint. I asked the cause, and the hesitation of your manner led me for the first time to hope—yet I dared not to name my love, and only besought you to treat me as heretofore. But why do I dwell on all this? It is to show you what I am—to open my heart fully, wholly, to one human being ere I die. My life has been a tissue of deceit—my death shall draw the veil aside. I know but one feeling that ever throbbed in my bosom which was amiable in its origin—my love for you; and that—the sweetest—best of passions,

has proved my destruction. But my mind wanders—I must resume the thread of my narrative, or the night will be at an end ere it be concluded; and then—why and then?—if I make not good speed, I shall be dragged as a malefactor to a dungeon!—No, no; that shall never be. * * * * *

"'You became acquainted with Major Beaumont; then, for the first time, I feared a rival; he possessed all those estimable qualities which I only assumed, in addition to which he was young and handsome. I hated—*mortally* hated him—as your intimacy increased, my dislike kept pace with it; and soon my breast became the stormy retreat of two conflicting passions—love towards you, and hatred towards Major Beaumont. At this period I made proposals to your father for your hand; from him I met with every encouragement I could desire, though he recommended me to delay speaking to you on the subject for a short time. At length, however, the ice was broken, and you told your father you did not wish to marry.

Not wish to marry?—that perfect form—

that beautiful and ever-varying face—those eyes swimming in liquid fire—that gentle affectionate disposition—doomed to single life!—Perish the thought! I inwardly exclaimed; she will marry, but it will not be myself. Your father, seeing how deeply I felt your refusal, used his most strenuous efforts to prevail upon me to consider it only as the coquetry or caprice of the moment, since he knew how highly you esteemed me, and that you had no other attachment.—'Esteem!' I hastily exclaimed, 'will esteem satisfy a love like mine?' But expressing myself grateful for his permission to hope for a favourable result, I determined to leave no means untried to gain your heart.

"'At this period that frightful scene took place, which even now I cannot recall to my mind without a shudder. Your horses took fright and dashed with you towards the precipice. I made no effort to save you—I could not do it; for let me confess it to you alone of all the world, I am a very coward! In infancy I feared to do what other children gloried in, but I soon knew that I must hide my cowardice from the

world; I did so, and lived in it unsuspected. I had not the power of doing what Beaumont did to save you; I should have dropt from my horse ere I reached the spot. I sat motionless—breathless—in expectation of seeing her whom I loved almost to madness, dashed to pieces; when Beaumont, with the courage of a man, rushed forward to save your life or perish with you; I, who alone ought to have saved you, moved not a step! I felt the die was cast—that you were from that moment lost to me. Oh! how I cursed the man who in saving you from destruction, had won laurels which I could not—dared not attempt to win! Your father soon informed me that he had given up all hope of prevailing upon you to accept my hand. How did my heart swell with passion, whilst with calm and serene looks I expressed myself satisfied with your decision, since my public station allowed me little time for indulging the softer feelings of our nature. Your father appeared surprised by my ready assent to a dismissal. He had been offended, I perceived, by the supineness of my conduct when your life

was in danger, and we parted in coldness though not in anger. But under that cold and guarded exterior a fire raged in my breast, to which only a volcanic eruption could be compared. On my arrival at Wilton I retired to my room, and acted to the very life a madman. I gnashed my teeth, tore my hair out by the roots, exclaiming, 'Dolt — coward that I am! why did I not rush to the precipice, snatch her myself from destruction, or with her sink into the fearful abyss! Now am I despised, scorned, loathed.'

" 'Could you know what I have suffered for your sake, however you might despise, you still would pity me.—Pity!—do I live to wish for pity?—No: I scorn it.—I was born to be admired—loved—envied—hated—any thing but pitied!

" 'Where am I rambling? I must strive to be more methodical. My cowardice was involuntary: I had no command over it;—I would have given the world to have been *compelled* to attempt your rescue, at that moment when Beaumont saved you, and won your father's

gratitude (for *your* affection I believe he possessed long before). I was at length so worn out by the violence of conflicting passions after parting from Mr. Elmwood, that without undressing, I sunk upon a couch, and took a few hours of unquiet slumber; after which I threw myself into my carriage and returned to town, where, occupied by affairs of state, no one suspected that my calm and placid demeanour was but, the cover to a subterraneous fire raging then with fury, and destined to burst with redoubled violence (from that very concealment) upon the head of one individual. I soon learnt that you and Major Beaumont were betrothed to each other; I heard it with a smile—a bitter smile. I saw you in town—congratulated your father on your happy choice, and told him I had seen the folly of a man of my age, and in my situation, addressing so young a person as yourself, or even thinking of marriage at all. I shook Beaumont by the hand, called him a lucky fellow, and added, if mortal could deserve such happiness, I believed him to be the man. I turned from him, and *cursed* him deeply!

"'At this period, Beaumont parted with his valet, in consequence of having reason to suspect him of dishonesty. I had observed the man, and fancied him fitted for my purpose; I therefore hired him, without inquiring his character. I asked him frequent questions respecting Beaumont and yourself. He was shrewd, and soon suspected the report of my being a discarded lover to be true; likewise, that I still loved you, and hated my fortunate rival. At length, I found it necessary to repose a kind of confidence in him—enough to let him know that I *should* be glad to prevent your union, without exactly acknowledging it. 'Leave it to me, my lord,' he replied, 'and I will take care that Major Beaumont shall trouble you no more.' 'How, Jervis, what mean you?' 'Ask no questions, my lord, but leave the affair to my guidance; only say, do you wish the major to be removed out of Miss Elmwood's way *for ever?*' As he spoke, he fixed his keen eyes upon me with a look which I could not misunderstand; I hesitated and stammered, 'Yes—no—stop, Jervis (for he was leaving the room),

attempt not to injure him—some other way must be found.' Jervis bowed affirmatively, and retired; but he had lighted a train which until then I knew not was laid. I wished to separate you from your lover—the means of doing so I had not thought of, but Jervis's words, and still more his looks, told me that he was ready to do my bidding, were it murder! I shuddered at the idea, and endeavoured, though in vain, to dismiss it from my thoughts. A short period only elapsed ere I received a letter from your father, requesting me to attend your marriage, in consequence of my having expressed a wish to that effect. I instantly proceeded to Wilton, where I found the whole neighbourhood occupied in preparations for the wedding, which was to be celebrated with all the splendour usually attendant upon the nuptials of an heiress of noble family. I spent great part of several days at Elmwood, and each day returned home with every nerve writhing under the torment of having seen you and my hated rival conversing together with all the *enjouement* natural to your situation. After one of these visits, I imme-

diately sent for Jervis. 'In two days,' said I, 'Major Beaumont will be married to Miss Elmwood.'—'So I hear, my lord.'—'Did you not say you would prevent it?'—'If it was your lordship's wish that I should do so, but you ordered me not to injure him.'—'True, very true—but why injure him? can he not, by some means, be removed for a short time?' Jervis only shook his head. 'If you are as ingenious as I believe you to be, you can devise some means of separating him from Miss Elmwood, until I have an opportunity of assuming his place in Miss Elmwood's favour, as he has done mine.'—'That would be but just, my lord; but if your lordship is determined that I shall not injure Major Beaumont, it is impossible for me to assist you—the time is much too short for forming and executing a plot of such magnitude, for the day after to-morrow I understand the marriage will take place.' I started at the repetition of what I well knew to be a fact. 'Have you, then, nothing to propose, by which to save me from this misery?'—'If your lordship will trust this affair to me, without any re-

strictions, and promise me a thousand pounds if I succeed, I will, with the assistance of a friend in service, take care that Major Beaumont shall no longer stand between you and the possession of youth, beauty, and wealth.'

"I could not mistake his meaning—for a moment I recoiled—but I had accustomed myself to think of murder until the horror was lessened to my view; and therefore, in low tones, I replied, 'Remove the viper out of my path, and the reward be yours.' Jervis bowing low, and saying, 'Enough, my lord,' withdrew. I had said the word, and wished not to unsay it; but unable to rest a moment still, I paced my room all night. The necessity of not being suspected, alone made me dress and breakfast as usual, and afterwards mount my horse. I did not again see Jervis until Beaumont was no more! The first intimation of the dreadful deed was received from my steward. After dismissing him, I sent for my valet, who came in with all the coolness of a practised villain. 'Is Beaumont dead?' I tremblingly inquired.—'So I have been told, my lord.'—'Told?' I repeated.

'Yes, my lord; he is supposed to have committed suicide—indeed, I have little doubt of it, for I have suspected *him* of insanity ever since he accused *me* of theft"—an ironical smile passed over his countenance as he spoke. 'I wish I could believe this, Jervis; but I know thee to be a villain, and fear thou art a murderer.' He started, and looked round with momentary affright. 'Say not such words, my lord, if you value your honour or life; for be assured I suffer not alone: leave this affair, as you have hitherto done, to my guidance, and you will escape unsuspected—whisper but a word of suspicion as to the cause of Major Beaumont's death, even to the winds, and your life is in peril. What I have done is by your connivance—you will be principally benefited by it; therefore, for your own sake, beware what you say.'—'Scoundrel! dare you threaten me—did I tell you to murder him?'—'Hush, hush, my lord, if you value your safety, walls have ears.'—'My safety, fellow?—dost think it will be compromised in thine?'—'Listen to me, my lord,' he replied, in a low but firm tone: 'if

you breathe the remotest suspicion of my being concerned in this affair, I will at once acknowledge it—state that it was by your instigation I committed the crime, for which I am to receive one thousand pounds; and, high as your rank and character stand, my tale will not be doubted, when it is recollected how long you were a suitor to Miss Elmwood, how large her fortune, and how much your noble castle,' with an ironical smile, 'stands in need of repair. When to this is added, that you took me into your service, although not very honourably dismissed by Major Beaumont, and that his death could avail me nothing, since his watch and purse are on him, whilst it will probably place you in possession of every wish of your heart; when all this is remembered, do you think I shall be doubted? No, my lord; from this moment our fates are joined; we sink or swim together—I fall not alone.'

"As the rascal ceased, I covered my face with my hands, and groaned aloud. At length I said, 'Jervis, you are a bloody, desperate villain; but you truly say—we must now sink

or swim together; proceed, therefore, as you will, and apprehend no interference from me; but make me not a further party to your accursed schemes—the thousand pounds so dearly earned shall be yours, so soon as all inquiry respecting this sad affair shall cease, and you have left the kingdom: now, leave me.' Jervis then bowed respectfully, and quitted the apartment.

" 'I could not hide from my own conscience that I was virtually a murderer—nay, so decidedly such, that my life might become amenable to the violated laws of my country; yet with this load of guilt attached to me, I must appear to the world not only as spotless, but bearing a front which could brave the strictest scrutiny. I was one of the first to condole with your father on the dreadful event which had disturbed the happiness of his family. No one appeared to investigate the cause of Beaumont's death, with so strict a scrutiny as myself; I even seemed one of the sincerest mourners. I remained in the country not only until the inquest was held upon the

body, but, such an adept in deceit was I, that at the request of your father, I attended the funeral as one of the chief mourners. I then returned to town, where I gladly dismissed Jervis for America, with his promised reward.

" 'My heart was lacerated by hearing that the woman whom I adored, and for whose sake I had committed murder, was herself reduced to a state of utter insensibility—become a maniac! She whose smiles I had hoped in time to enjoy, was by my means brought to this direful state! All that I suffered before was nothing to this dreadful moment. Years rolled on—I saw you restored to reason—the brilliance of your beauty was somewhat obscured, but in place of that captivating archness of manner, which had seemed one of your chief attractions, a soft and tender melancholy, still more bewitching, appeared in every look and word. That love which for a time had been smothered in my bosom, not extinguished, burst forth with renewed violence. I determined that you should be mine, or I would perish in the attempt.

There were moments in which I was led to hope that my constancy would make a favourable impression on your mind; then a word, a look of ice, has chilled me to the soul. Your father's death took place at a period when I flattered myself I was making some progress, not in your love (for that I knew was buried in the grave of Beaumont), but in your esteem and friendship. Even after that event I would not quite despair: your regard for your father's memory, I trusted, might lead you to comply with his most anxious wish, and eventually become mine. A message from yourself confirmed this hope, and when at length you consented to see me, my heart beat with rapture at the thought.

"But how were my joyous feelings checked, when my eyes fell upon the figure of Major Beaumont, as I last beheld him, radiant in manly beauty! For an instant, to my conscience-stricken view, he appeared standing alive before me; but, accustomed to self-command, I soon rallied my presence of mind; you then placed a picture in my hand —

that horrible picture—and with words and looks fixed upon a figure, which conscience caused me instantly to perceive was meant to represent myself, said, or seemed to say, 'that was the murderer.' All presence of mind, all self-command, that moment left me. I felt that by some inexplicable means, you were informed of my criminal conduct, and I fled. Who was your informer, I know not—I care not; life is to me no longer worth saving. The conviction that I was even suspected by you to be a murderer, would paralyze every faculty; that the woman whom I adored, viewed me with abhorrence, would be ten thousand times worse than death. Should I live, it would be in momentary expectation that officers of justice would drag me to prison, and of being ultimately executed as a malefactor! Forbid it pride!

"When you receive this, I shall have offered up my life as a voluntary expiation of my crime towards you. No executioner shall perform the deed. Coward though I am, I dare cut the thread of my own existence;

but it is because I have not the greater courage to bear the world's derision and contempt! Thanks to my earliest tutor, a valet of my father's, who (a Frenchman, and disciple of Voltaire) had no religious scruple; I scoff at all that priests have taught. When you read this, Miss Elmwood, I shall be as if I had never been—a piece of clay; this body, now so strong and well-built, will be a lifeless piece of earth; this mind, which has had power to guide a nation's weal, will be nothing. But should it *not* be so, what then shall I be? Ah! 'that way madness lies.' I must not now even for a moment think that possible, which if it were, would send me to eternal perdition! Though you have caused me to become a murderer, I will not curse you—I cannot bless you.

"'WILTON.'

"Horror-struck I read this letter; for a time tears were denied me; at length they burst from my overcharged heart, and gave some relief to that oppression which seemed too much to endure. Thankful I felt that my

dearest father had been spared the pain of knowing how criminal, how every way worthless, was the being, whom for so many years of his life, he had honoured with his esteem, admiration, and warmest friendship. What had those parents to answer for, who instead of endeavouring to subdue the strong passions with which nature had endowed their child, had only taught him to conceal them. Had Lord Wilton been in his youth instruoted in the faith and duty of a Christian, he might have lived an honour to his country and to himself, and have died in the hope of a blessed eternity. What a dreadful contrast his fate has been—an acknowledged murderer—suicide—atheist!

"An inquest was held on the body of Lord Wilton, and I was required to send the letter which had been found addressed to me, for the perusal of the coroner. Thus was his guilt made public, and the memory of my lamented Beaumont cleared from every stain. Search was made after Jervis, for a long time without success, at length he was found by the police

officers, associated with a set of gamblers, in the metropolis, under the assumed name of Jamieson. He was, with his accomplice, tried for the murder, and after making a full confession of their guilt, they were convicted and executed.

"The painful circumstances attending Lord Wilton's death added to the depression of spirits I was before labouring under; but as time wore away, I thought with such satisfaction of my lamented Beaumont's character being at length restored to its original purity, as to efface much of my grief.

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"Many years have elapsed since the latter part of the above narrative was written; you, my dear Mary, were not then born; may the perusal of it cause you to reflect upon the vicissitudes to which humanity is subject, and not feel too confident of a continuance of that happiness which you now enjoy, but be prepared to bow with meek submission to the will

of Him who chastens but for our good. There was a time when life opened to my view, brilliant as imagination could conceive, but scarcely had my morning dawned, ere the brightness of the horizon was obscured by a black and heavy cloud, which burst over my devoted head; misery and distraction followed in its course, and all around became darkness and gloom; I dared not hope that it would ever pass away. I looked forward only to days of sorrow, and nights of agony; but a merciful Providence has graciously pleased to cause a happier destiny to await me. The dense cloud which continued to overhang my early years dispersed by degrees; 'tis true that, ere its total dispersion, the meridian of my life was passed, but though my noonday sun has been obscured, it now sets, if not brilliantly, at least tranquilly and serenely, and with a blessed hope of again rising in glory!

"I have long been able to find my own happiness in promoting that of others, and I look forward, with humble faith and hope, to meeting him in the realms of everlasting bliss, from

whom in this world I was so direfully divided. We must not venture to ask unerring Wisdom, why one so truly excellent was suffered to become the prey of a villain! No; humbly I have endeavoured to submit to the divine dispensation, convinced that equally wise and inscrutable are the ways of Providence."

THE CONVICT'S WIFE.

THE CONVICT'S WIFE.

As I was proceeding towards the rectory one morning, my attention was arrested by a group of children playing close to the small gate by which we enter the churchyard. As Southend can boast its full proportion of the rising generation, such a sight may be supposed by no means unusual. But the inhabitants of this village are generally so neat and cleanly in their persons, that I at once perceived these forlorn-looking children to be strangers. I stopped to ask whence they came, when they all looked up from the work on which they were busily employed, the erection of a mud bridge across an open drain, and gazed without

attempting to reply. I repeated my question with no better success, whilst the eldest child, a fine handsome boy, about six years of age, fixed his large black eyes upon me, with an expression which I scarcely knew whether to designate waggishness or cunning. The second child, likewise a boy, appeared more delicate, and somewhat lame; the youngest, a girl, notwithstanding the dirt with which she was covered, and a skin which, to judge from its appearance, had never known the application of soap and water, was singularly beautiful.

"Where do you live?" said I, putting my question in a new form.

The elder boy, with a roguish leer, went on with the formation of his mud arch, supporting it ingeniously enough with a pillar of stone, whilst the little girl, in the imperfect accents of childhood, said, as she pointed to the poorhouse, "We live dere, ma'am."

I instantly felt assured that these must be the children of a convict, who together with their mother, had been passed to Southend the preceding day. My interest was strongly awak-

ened for these unfortunate children. "Here," said I, internally, "are souls to be saved from destruction; that boy, perhaps, has already made some progress in the road which has led his father to so sad a fate; it shall be my business not only to endeavour to counteract those evil propensities he may have already imbibed, but to train all these children in a right path." Then, commending the little girl for answering my question, I proceeded directly to the workhouse, where I inquired for Mr. Jobson, who has the charge of the poor, and who is likewise parish clerk; he immediately came out to me, when I applied to him for information respecting the children whom I had seen.

"Don't you remember Kitty Dawson, to whom you were so kind, madam?" said he.

"Certainly," I answered, with some surprise; "I am not likely to forget poor Kitty, though she did disappoint my hopes so sadly."

"These are her children, madam; she is the convict's wife who has been passed to

our parish, which you may have heard of; they arrived yesterday evening."

"Is it indeed so? I am sorry—I am shocked. I feared there was no prospect of her husband's reform; yet I scarcely anticipated seeing her reduced to such a state of degradation." As I uttered these words with undisguised emotion, Mr. Jobson was called away by the sound of the vestry bell, when saying he would wait upon me after the meeting, and give me all the information he had been able to gain on the subject, he quitted me, having first, in answer to my inquiry if the unfortunate woman was within, informed me she had gone out early and had not returned. I then slowly proceeded towards the rectory, but on going through the churchyard, I perceived a female seated on old Farmer Dawson's grave; her dress was ragged and dishevelled, an old black silk bonnet was pulled over her face, so as to hide it entirely; her hands, thin almost to transparency, were clasped firmly together. As I was on the point of passing, I stopped involun-

tarily, and asked the poor woman if she was ill. She slowly raised her head—our eyes met—and I recognised, as I feared might be the case, in the wan, attenuated, and care-worn face before me, some traces of the once beautiful Kitty Dawson! "Is it possible?" exclaimed I.

"Is what possible?" she repeated, in a hollow, though somewhat fierce tone.

"That I behold Kitty Dawson."

"I was once so named," she replied, as with a wild laugh, which thrilled through my veins, she rose from her melancholy seat; "but I am now Kate Jones, the convict's wife, come with my children to my parish for support."

The recklessness and wildness of her air and manner, as she thus spoke, made my blood turn cold. "I grieved deeply for your conduct, Kitty, when you left me;" I replied gently, "but never did I expect to feel the pain of seeing you reduced to such a state as this—you of whom my dear father and myself once thought so highly."

"Did he, and did you, think highly of me once? Oh! then I could not always have

been the weak lost being I now appear! Thank you, thank you, for that kind saying." And here the poor creature burst into an uncontrolled flood of tears.

"Kitty," I replied, "much as I am grieved to see you thus," and as I spoke, tears fell from my own eyes, "it rejoices me to perceive that you still feel pleasure in having been respected by him, whose good opinion was considered an honour by all who obtained it. You appear to have a fine young family; if I can assist you in bringing up your children in the love of virtue, and yourself in regaining your own esteem and that of others, I shall indeed be truly happy."

"Thank you, madam, a thousand times; I know I am a poor, lost, abandoned creature, but I still have some human feelings. Last night when I came back to the village in which I had lived innocently and happily, for so many years, I thought of those days—of my former friends—and I felt that the moment in which I had returned to the place of my birth, with my poor miserable children, a pauper and a con-

vict's wife, was more dreadful than if I had myself been sentenced to the gallows. As we slowly dragged our weary limbs along the village street, the children peered at me and my forlorn ones; whilst their mothers turned away with scorn and loathing. I deserve it all, but I felt I could not bear this scorn and obloquy; and after a night of agony, I rambled over the fields where I used to walk with you, but my brain became maddened with the thought of what I was, and what I am. I turned towards what is now my home, in fear of I knew not what; I was followed, hooted at, as the wife of a felon. I then flew to this place, to see how the dead would receive me, if they would rise from their graves to gibe and scoff at me. I would have knelt at my mother's grave, but durst not, though wearied with my walk, I sunk down here; wild and fearful thoughts were in my mind, when you came like an angel from heaven to speak pity and consolation to me." Here the unfortunate woman, overcome by the acuteness of her feelings, again sunk upon her parent's grave.

I strove to console her, and at length succeeded in rousing her from her state of grief, by representing the probability of her children meeting with some injury, if left in the public road. After making her promise to come to me in the afternoon, I turned towards home, for my heart was too full to admit of my paying my proposed visit that morning. To see one who had so long been a favoured inmate of my father's house a pauper, and the wife of a malefactor, was indeed painful!

Kitty was the only child of a small but respectable farmer in Southend, who, with his wife dying when she was quite a child, had on his death-bed entreated my father's protection for the orphan girl. When John Dawson's little farming stock was sold, and his few debts paid, two hundred pounds were found remaining, which my father determined should accumulate for Kitty, as he took her to his house, and paid the trifling expenses that were requisite on her account himself. She was instructed by me in reading, writing, and needlework, by the servants in the equally

desirable knowledge of household employments. We found the young orphan tractable in temper, and quick in intellect; whilst her personal beauty was such as to draw upon her the admiration of all who beheld her. She soon became the pet of the whole family; but having more than once seen the ill effects of bringing up children in a superior manner to the sphere in which they had been born, I resolved, although it might be some restraint upon my own wishes, not to place her too much above her real station in society; therefore only in the hours of instruction, when assisting me in the flower-garden, or accompanying me in my walks, for the purpose of conveying a little basket, in which I could place the fruits of my botanical researches, was Kitty my companion. At other periods she was under the care and tuition of an old and confidential domestic, who endeavoured to make her useful in performing various light services. At the age of fifteen, Kitty was not only a very lovely girl, but really a valuable assistant in the house. She read so well, that frequently when

my dear father's eyes became dim, I was glad to have it in my power to procure her assistance in reading aloud to him. This necessarily caused her to be more with us than I had originally intended, and her manners consequently became softer and more polished; her knowledge increased with her years, and she might at a very early period have been termed a well-informed young person. I thought that, with her personal and other advantages, there was every probability of her marrying well; by this I did not mean highly—where she might perhaps be treated by her husband's connexions with contempt—but to some respectable tradesman, or well-educated farmer, whose own knowledge and manners might be sufficiently good to enable him to appreciate hers; and whose circumstances might be such as to make it unnecessary for her to attend to any but the lightest labours in her house.

Our gayest rural festival is that of May-day, at which she was chosen queen two successive years. Seldom has a prettier object been seen than Kitty, with her crown of flowers, carried

on a throne similarly decorated, herself the loveliest flower there. After she had attained her sixteenth year, though I still allowed her to attend the May-day dance on the green, I would no longer suffer her to be Queen of the May, as I thought it possible such homage to her beauty might be injurious to her. On one of these occasions, when about seventeen years of age, she danced with a very handsome young man of the name of Jones, who was the eldest son of a rich farmer in the adjoining parish. He had been educated at a good school, and afterwards placed, at a considerable expense, with an eminent farmer in the north of England, to learn the mode of farming in use there; but, like too many who have been similarly circumstanced, he spent that time which ought to have been devoted to agricultural pursuits, in hunting, racing, and drinking. On his return home, his fond, though weak mother, delighted to see her son so fine a gentleman, continued to supply him with money unknown to his father; who, imagining that he spent only his allowance, had no suspicion that when he affected to attend

different and distant fairs, to improve his knowledge respecting cattle, he was in reality going to various races, where he mixed in the worst society. Mr. Jones knew that his son's allowance would not admit of his entering into any unwarrantable expense, and therefore felt satisfied that he did not do so; not suspecting the foolish fondness of his wife had enabled their son to indulge in such follies and vices as he must otherwise have been debarred from. Such was the man who had danced with Kitty Dawson, and who became from that day the arbiter of her destiny—but neither she nor me were then aware of his character. I found that, in the course of a short time, she had met and walked with young Jones several times. I pointed out to her the danger and impropriety of this course—she readily assented to my wish, that she should not again walk with him, though she added, that she did not perceive any thing wrong in it.

"I am grieved and astonished to hear you say so," I replied, "since I had hoped that I had taught you to think differently."

"Forgive me, dear mistress," said she, "what I have said, and what I am about to say: I know well, that if I were a lady, it would be very improper in me to walk alone with any gentleman; but in my situation of life, people think differently—and," she continued, looking down, "young people, who are pleased with each other, constantly do so."

I answered, "Although there is some truth in what you say, you have been educated in a superior manner to the persons of whom you speak, consequently more is expected from you; besides which," I added, "you should consider whether Mr. Jones may think himself exactly upon an equality with you."

"His father is a farmer, ma'am, as mine was," replied Kitty; "and though Mr. Jones now farms his own estate, and that is a very large one, Richard himself told me, that he had heard that my grandfather was born to larger property than his, but whilst one family rose in the world, the other went down; so that there is no reason why he should think himself much greater than myself."

"All that may be true, and yet you may be unsuitable companions; however, I request that you will have no secret interviews—no more walks together; if he really loves you, he will apply to my father for his approbation—if he does not do that, you may be assured his love is not what it ought to be."

Kitty, with tearful eyes, promised obedience to my wishes, and was, I believe, true to her promise, never quitting the house unless to attend me or our old housekeeper. But during this time, I have reason to think that young Jones wrote to her frequently, endeavouring by every means in his power to prevail upon her to meet him. In the interim, I made every possible inquiry into the character of the young man, who appeared to have gained such deep hold upon the affections of the ingenuous girl; when I heard with regret those circumstances respecting him which I have before stated—in short, that he was a very dissipated and unprincipled man, and had already destroyed the peace and reputation of more than one young woman who had confided in his protestations of affection; like-

wise, that his father, who was very avaricious, was endeavouring to promote a match between him and the daughter of an opulent grazier.

This character of young Jones made my father and myself very anxious on Kitty's account; we spoke to her without delay, told her all that we had heard, and besought her to give up all acquaintance with a young man, whom even to know was disgraceful. She wept as we addressed her—said she thought some enemy of Richard's must surely have deceived us—but promised, whatever pain it might cost her, to give up all intercourse with him. She accordingly wrote to Mr. Richard Jones, repeating some of the particulars of which we had been informed, and her consequent promise; she then prayed him, if what we had heard were true, to repent and reform—if it were not so, she besought his pardon for acting as if it were, in conformity with the wishes of those whom duty and inclination equally bound her to obey. She showed me her letter; there was nothing of which I could disapprove—it was therefore despatched. Within a week from that time, Kitty

Dawson fled with the unprincipled man who had gained entire possession of her youthful heart.

I was deeply grieved at the conduct of one whom I loved most tenderly, and into whose mind I had endeavoured to instil every moral and religious principle. Within a fortnight after her departure, she wrote to entreat the forgiveness of my father and self, and to assure us, that her crime in breaking her promise, and making so ungrateful a return for all our kindness to her during so many years, was not premeditated; but that she had one evening received a note from Richard, beseeching her to meet him at the shrubbery-gate, after the family had retired to rest, to hear from his own lips his justification, and to receive his last farewell; as, since she had so peremptorily refused his addresses, he could no longer bear to remain in England.

Thus entreated, and in the hope of hearing from him such a refutation of the charges against him as might enable her to revoke his sentence, she had so far erred as to meet him at the place and hour appointed. Although the family were gone to rest, the hour was not late—the moon shone

brightly, and the nightingales were singing so sweetly, that she had suffered herself to be prevailed on to walk a little way along the road, as being less liable to observation than the shrubbery. She scarcely knew how the time had passed, but was surprised, on seeing a postchaise stand at a turn of the road, to find that she was above a mile from home; when, to her consternation and displeasure, Richard placed her forcibly in the carriage, and then the postilion drove off. That for some time she had besought him to return with her to Southend; but, at last, he had prevailed upon her to go on with him, as his father, he said, would never overlook his having taken her off against her wish; but he did not doubt, that through the influence of his mother, he would forgive their marriage, although on account of the smallness of her fortune he had refused his consent hitherto, which had prevented any application to my father on the subject. In consequence of this reasoning, she continued, she had ceased to urge their return, and they were married on the following day: to this she added, that she should be quite

happy if she could only receive an assurance that my father and I forgave her, and would not think her guilty of deep ingratitude. She then requested, that my father would remit her little fortune, for which an order was enclosed, signed by her husband and self, to Messrs. ——, Red Lion Inn.

The pain that this event gave me I can scarcely express; yet it was a gratification to me to learn that Kitty had not intentionally deceived me; and since they were married, I hoped the young man might reform, and their union prove less unhappy than I still feared might be the case. I should have felt Kitty's imprudent conduct still more keenly, had not my apprehensions been awakened for my father, who was at that time very unwell, for he was then a great age, though his mind was still strong and active. At his desire, I called upon Mr. Jones, in the hope of prevailing upon him to make some little settlement on Kitty, ere her fortune was given up to his son. I was told that he was ill in bed, but that Mrs. Jones could see me. On explaining the business upon which I came to her, she said, "Oh, pray send the

money directly—poor Richard may be in want of it; his father has been ill ever since he left us, but I know he will soon forgive him, and I will persuade him to settle something on his pretty young wife—only pray don't let them want money in London; unluckily, I have nothing just now that I can send."

Notwithstanding what Mrs. Jones said, my father did not think it right to pay the money without the approbation of his attorney, who told him by no means to do so, as the marriage could not be considered legal. To this effect I wrote, assuring Kitty, at the same time, that although we deeply lamented her conduct, she had not only our pardon, but our sincere wishes that her choice might prove a happy one, and that her husband would convince us how well he deserved her by his kindness and affection. Three weeks afterwards, my father received a letter from the attorney in Red Lion Inn, enclosing a certificate of Mr. and Mrs. Jones's marriage, with an order for the payment of her little fortune, they having been married again by bans in London.

From this time we heard no more from Kitty; but the death of old Mr. Jones a few weeks afterwards, and the consequent publication of his will, led to the knowledge of a crime, of which no one had until then any suspicion; as in that will he stated, that in consequence of his eldest son having robbed him of two hundred pounds, for the purpose of absconding with Kitty Dawson, he left the whole of his property to his youngest son, ordering him to pay his mother one hundred and four pounds yearly, in weekly instalments, that she might not have it in her power to assist her son Richard with money, to whom he would not give a shilling to save him from the gallows; where, unless he reformed, his evil courses must lead him. Thus was Richard Jones's disgraceful conduct made public, and his name, coupled with that of poor Kitty, became the byword of the country.

Mr. Jobson had been unexpectedly called away immediately after the vestry meeting; therefore, I had no opportunity of hearing what crime had led to Richard Jones's transportation, prior to the visit of his wretched wife. She

came at my request, as the day was closing. Her old monitress and friend, Mrs. Walker, admitted her; but though I had told her whom I expected, and represented the state of misery in which I had beheld her, she could not bring herself to acknowledge or speak to one who had behaved so ungratefully to her dear master and young mistress (for to this day she frequently adds that epithet to my name); therefore, when Kitty, in humble tones, stood at the back-door asking for me, she was shown into the room without the slightest symptom of recognition. Whether this reception from one whom she had for many years been accustomed to call mother, had upset the little stock of resolution she had summoned to enable her to come at all, I know not; but as I caught a glimpse of her pale and almost ghastly features, I started in affright, and making her sit upon the couch whilst I ordered a glass of wine, which I almost poured down her throat, she burst into an hysterical flood of tears, which I suffered to flow some time without interruption. I was glad to see that her dress was more respectable than in the morning

—it was certainly that of a very poor person, but it was neatly pinned, and a clean handkerchief, cap, and apron, had removed that look of utter desolation which she then wore. When she had recovered in some degree from the agitation she had felt on first entering, she commenced a narrative, which, although broken and disjointed by her own frequent and violent emotion, was in substance nearly as follows:

"Upon the refusal of Mr. Melcombe to pay my little fortune to my husband, on the plea of our marriage not being legal, he gave way to such a paroxysm of rage as frightened me exceedingly. I had not before believed it possible that he could look so fearful. Until then, although I had seen him occasionally irritable or petulant, I had never seen him in violent passion, and I most sincerely prayed that I might never again behold him in such. Richard immediately gave orders for our bans to be published at the parish church during three successive Sundays, when we were remarried, the certificate of our marriage sent to Southend, and the money paid as we had requested. I wished

to write to you, dear madam, to thank you and my good master for your kindness to—for your forgiveness of—one who had made so poor a return for all you had done for her; but Richard would not consent to my writing again. He said I must forget all at Southend, as unless his father recalled him he should never return there, nor suffer me to have any intercourse with those who were there.

"Although at that time he was generally kind towards me, I had become fearful of offering the slightest opposition to his will, for if he had reason even to apprehend I might not willingly conform to what he wished, I saw in the scowl of his forehead and flashing of his eye, something which reminded me of that terrible paroxysm of passion, which I could not erase from my recollection. My love for my husband would have made me consent readily to any thing he wished that was not criminal; now a vague apprehension was mixed with that affection which had before reigned alone in my heart.

"Richard soon saw that, though I still loved him, I regarded him with fear; and he, far

from regretting or wishing to remove this apprehension, under the idea of its interfering with our happiness, appeared to glory in the contradiction of feeling he caused in my inexperienced heart. We had lodgings in a retired little street in the environs of London; here I was generally alone during many hours of each day, and having no household employments, I endeavoured to improve my mind, whilst I diverted it from thinking upon such subjects as I feared to dwell upon, by reading various works; and *if*, after having thus spent the greatest part of the day, my husband returned home in good humour, I forgot that I had been left without society or friends, though I durst not ask how or where he spent his time.

"Thus did weeks and months pass, during which I never went beyond the immediate precincts of my lodging; which, though very humble, was clean and comfortable. Richard scarcely ever walked out with me, and I feared to go out alone, as I had once been spoken to by a person in the dress of a gentleman, in a manner which alarmed me very much; and as I durst not tell my husband that his neglect ex-

posed me to insult, I was obliged to confine myself to the house, unless when he offered to walk out with me for half an hour. But these attentions became more rare each month, until in solitude and unattended, but by the servant of the house, my eldest boy was born.

"When I recovered my strength, I was much happier than before this event took place. I was no longer without a companion: I was no longer without an object on whom to lavish my affection. I frequently did not see my husband for days together; and when he did return to me, he would often repulse every endearment, and not even look at the infant, which in features, even at that time, strongly resembled himself; then I would retire to weep bitter tears of ill-requited affection. At other times, he would appear in great spirits—kiss our baby—be kind in his manner towards myself—ask if he could procure any thing to amuse me during his absence, saying it was in search of employment that he left me; but, alas! these starts of good humour bore no comparison to the frequency of those of moroseness, sullenness, or

passion! At length, instead of looking forward with anxious expectation to his return home, I almost feared to see him enter the room I occupied. One day, about six months after the birth of my boy, my husband returned home, apparently in high spirits, and said to me, 'I have just received information of the death of my father; he has, in consequence of my going off in the way I did, when he wished me to marry the rich grazier's daughter, left his estate to my brother; but as he has bequeathed me twenty thousand pounds, I am quite as well satisfied, since we can reside in London, which suits my taste better than agricultural pursuits.'

"I was too much shocked by the intelligence that Mr. Jones was dead, to express the pleasure Richard expected on hearing of his acquisition of fortune. 'Dead!' I repeated, 'is your father really dead?—and without having sent you his forgiveness, or acknowledged myself as his daughter?'—'Yes; but he was an old man, you know, and could not be expected to last long—think of our getting twenty thousand pounds, my girl!'

"Shocked at his want of filial affection, and utter heartlessness, I burst into tears; when the cloud gathering on his forehead, he exclaimed, 'Why, how is this?—when I told you, the last time I saw you, that I could give you no money, and that if I did not get employment soon, you and your brat must starve, you looked melancholy enough, but did not shed a tear; and now, when I tell you I am rich, and can shower gold into your lap, you only answer me by crying!' As he spoke, he threw a handful of coin, amongst which were several gold pieces, into my lap. Ere I could reply, he continued, 'To-morrow, Kate, we quit this lodging, and go to one more fitting our present fortune; till then, good bye.' And thus leaving me, I sunk into a train of painful thoughts until aroused from my revery by a faint noise in my baby's cradle. Upon going to him, he fixed his eyes upon my face, whilst a smile played around his beautiful mouth. I took him in my arms, and as I held him convulsively to my breast, I thanked heaven that my child, at any rate, was rescued from starvation. I had already been obliged to sell nearly

all the clothes with which I had been bountifully supplied during the first months of our union, and for several days past had subsisted only upon bread and tea, which I found very inadequate food for a nurse; in consequence of which, my baby began to show symptoms of feebleness and indisposition. On his account, I therefore rejoiced in being able to procure more fitting nourishment for myself, from the money with which I had been provided.

"Although I had been so distressed for money, my husband always appeared handsomely dressed; I believe he did not think of the straits to which I was driven to procure food. The little drawing-room and bed-room, which I had occupied until after the birth of my child, I had long resigned to other lodgers, using the same room (a small parlour in front), for every purpose. For this we were indebted to the landlady one month's rent; she had the day preceding told me that unless she was paid, without further delay, I must quit her house; therefore it was not without pleasure that I informed her I purposed quitting it the next day.

She replied, that if I was able to pay her the rent she required, she would rather I should remain there than have another lodger; though people in the neighbourhood did think it a little odd that a young woman like me should be left thus alone by my husband and friends; and some said the reputation of her house was injured by it. This cruel insinuation gave me pain, although my mind was so much occupied by other causes of uneasiness, that I did not dwell upon it as I otherwise should have done.

"The day following that on which I had heard of the death of my father-in-law, my husband came in a coach for me and the baby; he brought with him a box containing handsome mourning for myself, and new baby-clothes for our child. He waited with impatience until our dresses were changed, when we bade farewell to our humble home; but not without receiving many apologies from our landlady, for her having had the folly to think of speaking to me about so small a sum as the rent due, and curtseying almost to the ground as the coach rolled from her door.

"We had driven a considerable distance, when Richard pulled the check-string, and we stopped in front of a haberdasher's shop. Here he desired to be set down, and we went into the shop, whilst he made several purchases; then ordering another coach to be called, we entered it—we did the same thing again at a distance of about a mile. I did not venture to ask the cause of this frequent change of coaches, for the gloomy scowl was on my husband's brow, which I knew by experience was not the time for me to obtain any reply, but anger and reproach.

"Silently we proceeded in the third vehicle we had entered, until suddenly Richard said, 'I must beg that you will not tell any one that your name is Jones, or that you have ever been in town until to-day; from this time we are to be known only as Mr. and Mrs. Turner.' He knew that with me his will was law; and without daring to ask his motive for such a request, I promised obedience to his wishes. The coach again stopped, and we entered our new abode. I was astonished at the size of the house, two

floors of which were destined for our use. A servant out of livery opened the door, when my husband said, 'Your mistress has been so unfortunate as to be obliged to leave her maid ill on the road—can you procure any one to take charge of the child until we can hear of a desirable attendant?'—'One of the servants of the house, sir,' replied the man, 'can, I dare say, take care of the baby, and do any thing my mistress may require at present.'—'Send her here, then,' said Richard, imperiously.

"A neat-looking young woman immediately made her appearance, and proposed taking the child out of my arms. This I was on the point of declining, when my husband said sternly, 'Pray let the young woman take charge of the child, Mrs. Turner; you are unaccustomed to carry so heavy a burden, and may probably let it fall, or hurt yourself by the exertion.' My baby had hitherto been nursed by no arms but mine, yet I durst no longer retain it; and with trembling hands I placed it in those of the young woman, rising to accompany her. 'Till you have

seen your apartments, I shall await you here.' Bowing my assent to his wish for my return, I left the room. I saw my sleeping darling placed in a comfortable bed, and as the young woman appeared obliging, and promised not to quit him, I returned to my husband.

"As soon as I entered the drawing-room, in which he was seated, he said, 'I expect a few friends to dine with me to-day, some of whom are old friends of mine, others I have known but a short time; but to prevent any awkward mistakes, I think it right to inform you, that I have borne the name of Turner for some time—that I have had lodgings not far hence—and that my friends have understood the reason you did not earlier come to town was, your attendance being necessary to my father, who was very ill. Having said thus much, all I desire is that you will not speak or act in a way to contradict what I have stated.' In utter astonishment, I exclaimed, 'But the means I thought were obtained from your father's death, for our present superior style of living; how then could

you have lodgings near this?'—'Ask no questions,' he replied, 'I have already told you all that I think it necessary for you to know.'

'He then left me, and I saw him no more until immediately before dinner, when he introduced four of his friends to me. I did not like their style of conversation—it was very unlike what I had been accustomed to hear from you and your excellent father; it sounded gay, but was frequently mingled with oaths and execrations; and although they talked much of people of rank, and large parties to which they were in the habit of going, they gave me the idea of persons pretending to be genteel, rather than being so. Richard's manners assimilated too much with their own, though his very fine person gave him great superiority of appearance; and when he chose to assume a gentleness of demeanour, which, alas! I had long discovered to be only assumed, few persons could appear to more advantage. After I left the dining-room I saw no more of my husband or his friends, until at a late hour the next morning the former returned home, having been out all night.

"I had been too much accustomed to be left alone, for this to excite surprise or emotion. I was, however, no longer destined to lead the recluse life which I had done hitherto. My husband took me occasionally to the opera or play, and walked with me in the parks at Kensington gardens. My dresses were all made at the most fashionable milliners. I had a maid to wait upon the baby and myself, in addition to those of the house, which were entirely devoted to my service. I had one man exclusively to attend me, to follow my footsteps if I wished to shop, or to go any errands on which I had occasion to send him; whilst the servant out of livery attended to his master. Could I have forgotten all that had passed during eighteen preceding months, and could I have placed any reliance on the principles of my husband, I might now have been tolerably happy; and notwithstanding all these obstacles, I am ashamed to own that there were moments when, in the thoughtlessness of youth, I felt delighted with the beauty and novelty of all I beheld. Nay, what had at first appeared somewhat coarse in

the manners of our visiters, I began to consider as those of fashionable society, to which I had been unaccustomed.

"When we had been a short time in our new residence, Richard informed me it appeared to him desirable that we should remove to a house of our own, as lodgings would be inconvenient when our family increased, which we soon expected to be the case: he had therefore engaged a house in —— street for my accommodation, to which we should remove in the course of the following week. I expressed my readiness to do whatever he wished; then ventured to express a hope that we should be enabled to live at less expense than where we were, as I could not help fearing that our expenses exceeded his income. 'Oh, don't trouble yourself on that score—if I provide the money, it is of little consequence to you from what or whence it proceeds.' The following week we took possession of a large and elegant house in —— street, of which I was told to consider myself mistress. Here I found an increased establishment ready to receive us; rooms beautifully and newly furnished,

with mirrors reaching to the ground, and various pieces of furniture, of which I neither knew the use nor name: but doubting not that time would explain these things to me, I admired in silence, that I might not expose my ignorance to my servants, or to my husband's visiters, for I had not then any of my own. At this I was not surprised; for without some introduction I could easily conceive that no female could be noticed in London, and Richard's friends all appeared to be unmarried men.

"My confinement took place soon after our removal, when my second boy was born. Poor child! little dost thou know the elegance of the room in which thou first opened thy eyes—the number of attendants who greeted thy entrance into life—the richness of the baby-linen in which thy tiny limbs were wrapped; happy is it thou canst not recollect all this; to thee the white-washed wall, the iron bedstead, the coarse clothing, and coarser fare of the poorhouse, is as desirable as any other, for thy luxuries were taken from thee happily ere thou knewest what luxury was! I beg pardon, madam. my thoughts

wander; but when I reflect upon the strange vicissitudes I have known during a few short years, it sometimes seems like a painful dream, from which I vainly strive to arouse myself.

"As soon as I had recovered my strength after my confinement, Richard said it was requisite I should now see company, and act like the wife of a man of fortune. I replied I was ready to do whatever he desired, if he would only be so kind as to instruct me what that was. He then called me a good girl, adding I should have any thing I wished for, if I would attend to his directions. His behaviour to me was at all times so extraordinary, and so variable, that even at that period I was led to fear—nay, almost to wish, that there was in him some derangement of intellect, for this alone could excuse his frequent violent behaviour and language: in one of these fits of passion he struck his second child so violently as to cause that lameness which I fear he will never get the better of. Some days he would be in such a humour, that I durst not speak in his presence; at others (but, alas! those moments were so

rare that I ceased to look for them), he was kind and affectionate; in company he generally treated me with politeness, and frequently with tenderness, although perhaps but a few moments prior he had, when alone with me, loaded me with execrations. Under such circumstances, I naturally avoided seeing him alone as much as possible.

"Our house, in a short time, became the resort of the gay and dissipated, many of whom were persons of rank; some noblemen brought their ladies to visit me, and I soon had numerous female friends. Occasionally, I was surprised by a freedom of manner and language which I should not have expected to meet with in ladies of rank and fashion; but if I suffered any such thought to escape my lips, I found myself laughed at by those I addressed, and soon perceived that it was desirable for me, either to suppress such ideas altogether, or at any rate not to give expression to them, if I did not wish to become an object of ridicule to my more fashionable friends. Thus, I soon learnt, if not to emulate them, at least to conceal my

objections to their manners. There was constantly a great deal of high play at our house; this was evident to me, who did not understand such things, and whom no persuasions could induce to touch a card. There was a third or inner drawing-room, into which even I was never suffered to penetrate. Our upper man-servant took entire charge of it—he even dusted the furniture, and attended to the fire himself, although, with that exception, he did nothing in the house but attend to the sideboard. In this interdicted apartment, my husband and some of his friends frequently sat up all night, with various visiters of rank and fortune.

"Many pleasing young men were introduced to our parties, who late in the evening generally retired to this room; but seldom did they come a second time. I had afterwards reason to believe, that these were young men lately come into possession of considerable property, who, after having lost to a certain amount, were not invited to a repetition of their visits, lest suspicion should be brought upon the house. But at that time I had no idea of any thing of the kind.

"Thus every thing went on, until the birth of my third child: soon after which, I received what I considered a most insulting proposal from a young nobleman, who spent a great deal of time with us; he was particularly gentlemanly and pleasing in his manners, and in an evening, instead of joining the card-players, he generally occupied himself in attention to me, or some of my visiters, several of whom were excellent musicians. I knew nothing of the science of music myself, but I frequently sung one of those simple ballads, which you and my late dear master used to like me to sing. Lord Shenstone played well on the flute, therefore he made a most agreeable addition to a party in which cards too generally appeared the leading attraction, and was to me always a welcome visiter. I had received addresses from several of my husband's fashionable friends, at which I had expressed myself so indignantly, that I found myself laughed at, not only by them, but by Richard and the various ladies of rank who visited me. They told me such things were of every-day occurrence in fashionable society, and recommended me not to expose

myself by appearing angry at that, which was in reality a high compliment! From that time I therefore received such addresses with a degree of playfulness and raillery, which had the effect of repulsing my admirers, without subjecting me to ridicule.

"But Lord Shenstone was a very superior person—I had looked upon him as a friend—I admired—I esteemed him; his proposal, therefore, shot like a bolt of ice through my heart. I burst into tears—I accused him of every thing that was ungenerous and base, and then in anger quitted him; but he was not thus easily repulsed—day after day he continued to come to my house and to intrude himself into my drawing-room, although I had given all my servants orders to deny me to him. At length, determined no longer to submit to such persecution, I said I should immediately inform Mr. Turner of his dishonourable conduct; upon which, he replied, 'To convince you how little you can rely upon your husband's protection or honour, I must request you to look at this letter.' Seeing it was

Richard's writing, I took it in my hand, and read with eyes almost bursting from their sockets, the horrid proposal to make over all claim to me for the sum of two thousand pounds, he having for some time seen his lordship's admiration of me. I read no more, but dashing the letter on the ground, flew rather than ran to the room in which I knew Richard was still in bed.

"In vehement language, I told him, the insult I had received—the letter I had seen—and called upon him, if he wished to save me from madness, to say it was a forgery. 'Indeed it is no forgery,' he replied, with unusual coolness; 'the fact is, it is nearly up with us here—we are smoked, and can scarcely get a gudgeon to bite—two thousand pounds would enable us to try another scene of action. I should have made you over to some of these men long ago, but the fame of your beauty has drawn too many fish to my net, for me to think of parting with you as long as I could keep this house open. That can no longer be; I therefore recommend you to follow the example of

your female friends, who all 'laugh at human ties,' make a good bargain for yourself and the brats with Lord Shenstone, who really is very fond of you; and as he is, like yourself, rather puritanical, it will be an ease to his conscience to provide for the children whilst enjoying the society of the mother.'

"All I had before seen or imagined of Richard's profligacy was nothing to what I now heard—I remained as if fixed to the spot on which I stood. 'Now go, and make the best bargain you can for yourself and the brats with Lord Shenstone; for if I abscond, you must go upon the parish.'—'Wretch! villain!' I exclaimed, roused to a state of madness, 'have I, then, been all this while the mistress of a common gambling-house, and the associate of women of infamous character?—and do you unblushingly offer to sell your wife, that you may revel upon the proceeds of her infamy?'—'Heyday, madam,' replied he, starting from his bed in fury, 'how dare you speak to me in this way—do you pretend to say you were not aware that this was a gaming-house, seeing as you did nothing but gambling around you?—or could you by

such a fool as to suppose your female friends really had any right to the titles they bore? At any rate, you are now undeceived;' and gnashing his teeth with rage as he caught hold of me, 'therefore, go—do as they do, and never let me see you more;' then pushing me with violence out of the room, he bolted the door.

"The blood rushed to my heart, and for a few moments I sunk upon the landing, utterly unconscious of all around me; but only too soon a state of consciousness returned, and I felt how very a wretch I was. The circulation which had been impeded now returned with redoubled force; I felt the blood mounting to my brain—I heard the loud beating of my heart—the throbbing of every pulse—I seemed almost choking with emotion; and, without giving myself time for the slightest reflection, I rushed into the room in which I had left Lord Shenstone, exclaiming, 'It is indeed too true, that my husband is a villain!' His lordship, seeing me so violently agitated, strove by every gentle method to sooth me into composure. At length, I was relieved by tears; never were tears more welcome—I think but for them my heart must

have burst. Lord Shenstone attempted not to interrupt them, until he saw me becoming somewhat more composed; he then resumed the proposal I had before treated with such scorn—he assured me of his entire affection—that my children should be to him as if they were his own—and, finally, he offered to make a large settlement upon me and them.

"Oh, madam, you who never have been placed in a state of temptation, cannot judge what mine was; ill-treated—scorned—execrated—and *sold*—by the man, whom I once so tenderly loved, but whom I now abhorred. Myself and children, destitute of protection or support—a young nobleman, whom I esteemed and admired, offering me his heart and purse—present protection and a luxurious home, with a permanent provision for myself and children—and that, too, at a time when I was suffering almost to madness at the insults received from my worthless husband. I was tempted, but not utterly beyond my strength—at that moment, those seeds of virtue, sown by your hand, showed that although the soil in which they were placed had been transferred

into a hotbed of luxury and depravity, they had not entirely lost their original character—the recollection of the lessons of your revered father, 'never to do evil that good might arise,' of your pure manners and admirable precepts, arose in my mind, and saved me from sin. I declined Lord Shenstone's too tempting offers; I told him I was determined rather to starve with my children in the streets, than submit to that infamy to which my husband would consign me. He heard me with respect and pity, and left me with feelings overwhelmed by the misery of my situation.

"Within a few hours after he had quitted the house, I received a letter from that nobleman, written in terms which did honour to his heart; he therein stated that he had first visited my husband in the hope of saving a friend from ruin, who was unfortunately addicted to play, when having beheld me, he had become so far fascinated as to continue his visits. Accident had, he said, placed him in possession of such facts as must criminate my husband, if brought forward; yet he could not answer to his conscience suffering a longer con-

tinuance of a system which had already been the ruin of many—nor had he altogether the power of preventing the conduct of my husband and his colleagues being investigated, since he was not the only one aware of those criminal acts to which he had alluded. On my account, he continued, he alone apprehended the result; but after my husband's conduct, he thought I could have no objection to separating from him entirely; in which case, he recommended that I should let him know that officers of justice would be in search of him on the following day—that I should instantly get a deed of separation drawn up and signed by him, when he, Lord Shenstone, would settle upon me two-thirds of the sum he was to have paid my husband for my possession, giving him the remaining third to enable him to depart for another hemisphere. If I would assent to this, he would give me his honour never even to attempt to see me, unless at my own request. He concluded with assuring me, that if he could thus serve me, he should feel much happier than in

the gratification of a passion sincere as ever glowed in the bosom of man.

"With tears of joy I read this letter—not that for a moment I thought of taking advantage of its contents—but it convinced me that I had not been mistaken in the opinion I had formed of his lordship's character, and, likewise, that I still held a place in his esteem. I answered the letter without delay, vainly attempting to express my full sense of gratitude, but absolutely and for ever declining his assistance. I thought that my safety lay in flight, and that I must not again see, nor, if possible, hear of this too amiable nobleman. I did not see Richard until the evening, when, on his return home at an early hour, he broke out into a most outrageous fit of passion at my still remaining in the house. I did not attempt to interrupt him until he appeared almost to have worn himself out with his own violence. I then told him that Lord Shenstone had requested me to intimate to him, that officers of justice would be in pursuit of him the next day.

"'I know it,' he gloomily replied; 'and had you not been a fool, I might have been master of two thousand pounds, with which I would have sailed to America, and you would never have heard or seen more of me—as it is, my fate must be yours; therefore, be in readiness to leave this house, with your children, to-night, for sheriff's officers will be in possession of the place before noon.'

"I then by his desire prepared for my departure, putting up a few changes of linen only for the children and myself; in doing which, I was surprised to find that my ornaments and all my best wearing-apparel were removed. Supposing them stolen, I returned to inform Richard of the circumstance, when he told me he had himself removed them in the morning. At ten o'clock, when the servants were all at supper, I took my sleeping baby in my arms, whilst Richard taking the two elder ones, who, always frightened in their father's presence, remained in speechless astonishment, preceded me down stairs, where I found a coach at the door, containing the parcel I had made up. We entered

it in silence, and in silence departed, for the coachman appeared to have had his orders before we arrived. We had driven about two miles, I should think, when Richard pulled the check-string, and ordered the man to take us to Greenwich. When near halfway there, we encountered several caravans, and Richard, taking advantage of their proximity to disappear amongst them, opened the door and jumped out, placing a paper in my hands, saying, 'There are directions for you; destroy it when read.' I had no time to speak, and so entirely did I now despise him to whom I was linked, that I scarcely know whether it was not a relief to feel myself and children left in this desolate and unprotected state, rather than accompanied by him.

"On arriving at the inn to which we had been directed, we were shown into a sitting-room, the man looking with some surprise at a lady, attired in a bonnet and mantle of the most elegant and costly description, carrying her baby in her arms, with two other children utterly unattended. My request for a sleeping-apartment,

however, met with immediate attention. I was no sooner left alone with my children, than I looked at the slip of paper on which was written, 'Remove to lodgings, or some small and retired public-house, to-morrow, by circuitous routes and various coaches, that you may not be traced; address a letter to Mr. Tedler, at the Granby, Tavistock-street, London, with your address, without your name—add nothing more—a friend will receive it for me. After this, remain at the same place, until you see or hear from me. My life depends upon your prudence.' I instantly destroyed the paper; then placing my children in bed, and praying to Heaven to give me strength of mind to bear the calamities with which I was assailed, I sunk at length to rest. My slumbers, though disturbed, refreshed me in some degree, for I was worn out both in body and mind by the agitation and fatigue I had endured. The next day I took a coach, and having discharged my little bill, proceeded to a shop, where I exchanged my elegant and really valuable walking-dress for one of a plain and not at all costly descrip-

tion; as new and old dresses were exposed for sale at the same place, the exchange was effected without any money being required, which was to me an object of importance, as I possessed only a few pounds, and knew not how long I might be without any thing else to support us. I requested the good woman of the shop to call another coach, into which my box was put (it having been taken out of our former vehicle by the driver, who no doubt supposed they were clothes, which I was going to pawn or sell). I then, with my wondering children, the eldest of whom was not four years old, drove into the outskirts of the place, until on a very small house I saw 'Parlours to let.' Here I stopped, and finding that they would accommodate me with a crib, in which my eldest child could sleep, I engaged the two apartments, which united were scarcely so large as the dressing-room I had lately occupied.

"I had been for the last two or three years accustomed to so much attendance and so many luxuries, that I had almost forgotten how to attend upon, or even dress myself; and now I

found myself obliged to do every thing that was required for my three children likewise; the consequence of which was, that each night when I went to bed, I was so weary that I soon dropped into a state of tranquil repose. Thus a fortnight passed, and my little stock of wealth was almost at an end; I still possessed my watch, but I wished to retain it to the last moment, which I feared had nearly arrived, when a post letter was delivered to me, with these words in Richard's hand, 'Be ready with your children to-morrow evening to start for London—a coach will come for you, and will bring you to me.'. With a grieving heart did I prepare to obey his summons, but he was my husband, and there was no alternative.

"On the evening appointed, a coach came to my lodgings, the driver bringing two or three lines in Richard's hand, desiring me to place myself and children without fear under his care; this I accordingly did, and we were immediately driven to town, and through many streets, of the appearance of which I knew nothing. At length we stopped at a mean-looking house,

in a narrow street; as the coachman stood holding the door of the coach, whilst a maid-servant, in a dress far from cleanly or neat, opened that of the house, my heart misgave me, and I hesitated whether to get out, fearing lest I might enter some house that was not respectable, since I could place no reliance on the honour of my husband. Seeing my hesitation, the woman said, 'The gentleman waits for you up stairs, ma'am.' Then the recollection of Richard's probable anger at my delay, induced me to descend, and with my baby in my arm, and my other two little ones clinging to me, I ascended the steep and narrow stairs. With difficulty my eldest boy could climb up them, my second child was quite unable to do so, therefore I was obliged, though unwillingly, to consign him to the dirty hands of the servant.

"We ascended two stories ere the young woman pointed out the door at which I was to enter; there to my surprise I found a stranger seated, on which I was going to retire, but the attendant having placed my child upon the floor, and closed the door ere I could do so, the

stranger, who, from his dress, appeared to be a man in a respectable station of life, requested me to be seated. Thanking him, I said, 'You perhaps are aware that I have been led to expect my husband here.'—'What is your husband's name, ma'am?' Here the idea that I had probably only been trepanned to this place, to give information that might lead to Richard's detection, struck me, and I replied, 'If you are his friend, you must already know it; if, on the contrary, a stranger, it is unnecessary that you should be informed of it.'

"The person to whom I spoke, now burst into a loud laugh, and exclaiming, 'Bravo, Kate!'—I discovered him to be my husband; but so altered, by his light hair and whiskers being dyed black, his complexion bronzed, and his dress, which, when we separated, was rather in an extreme of fashion, now being in the style of a person in an inferior station of life, to whom fashion was entirely unknown, that I should not have recognised him any where; and as he was a celebrated mimic, any tone of voice, and manner of speaking, which he chose to assume appeared natural to

him, and gave him still greater facility of evading discovery. The name we were now to be known by, I was told was Mercer, and as it was of the greatest importance that we should not be discovered, I was ordered not to quit the house, if possible to avoid it, and then only to do so at night. 'In that box,' said Richard, pointing to one in the corner, "you will find some clothes better suited to you and the children, than what you have been wearing: I sold your ornaments and apparel, and with the money I received I have purchased the furniture of these rooms, and our present clothing. As you have not been used to do any thing, but be a fine lady, for some years, nor indeed have ever been of much use in the way of work, I spoke to the landlady to get some assistance for you, and she has engaged a girl, whom you will see in the next room. I am now going out, I shall be back before daybreak, when you must have something for me to eat.'

"He then, without waiting for any reply, quitted the room, and with a heavy heart, I went in search of a resting-place for my children, who had not received the slightest

received the slightest notice from their father. The room in which I was contained an old-fashioned mahogany table, six common painted chairs, with seats of rushes, which had evidently been much used, an old morine window-curtain, a piece of carpet, and hearth-rug, which had once been blue and white, but which now bore little vestige of either, a tin fender, a poker, and fire-shovel; the grate contained a handful of fire, while a small candle lighted, or rather exhibited the darkness of the room. Opening a door, I found myself in a room, or more properly a large light closet, in which was a kind of bedstead, without posts or hangings, and a large crib sufficient to contain two children; these and a chair, on which was seated a sickly dirty-looking child, about twelve years of age, whom I found was to be my servant, were all the room contained; the produce of one pair of my numerous earrings would have purchased all our furniture! The girl offered to assist me in putting my children to bed; but with a shuddering emotion, at the thoughts of their being touched by her soiled fingers, I de-

clined her offer. Alas! I have lived to look upon all I have now described, as luxuries. After seeing my little ones at rest, I asked where this girl was to sleep, when she told me the landlady had given her leave to sleep with her servant, whose cousin she was. I then dismissed her, and myself retired to rest, since I must rise at so early an hour, to admit my husband. He came at the time he had named, when, after eating a hearty meal, he retired to bed, whence he did not rise until evening.

"Thus we continued to live for a length of time. By degrees my mind became more accustomed to the misery of my situation, and my body more inured to the fatigue attending it. The supplies of money I received were so small, that it was with difficulty I could procure food for the family; and as I found that my little domestic was of scarcely any service, that she was dirty in her person, and frequently made use of very improper language before the children, I resolved to part with her, and do all the work myself. On this occasion, my husband gave me one of the few marks of

approbation my conduct ever met with, saying, 'Now that's a good girl, Kitty, I always knew you could work if you would, and now that you are a poor man's wife, you show your sense by acting like one.' With my rooms to clean, my husband to cook for (for myself and children little cooking sufficed, potatoes, bread and cheese, or tea, being our only food), my children to attend upon, and to wash and iron for all, you may be sure I went to bed every night with weary limbs; but this very labour, I believe, assisted towards keeping me in health, since it prevented the possibility of my thoughts dwelling closely upon my misery.

"I saw but little of Richard, as, although he did not often remain out during the day, he never arose until evening, but took his meals in bed; sometimes he came home intoxicated, when his imprecations and threats were such, as to cause myself and children to seek refuge from his fury in a closet, until we knew that he had fallen asleep; at other times he would sit in sullen silence, with his eyes fixed upon the empty grate, where I could rarely indulge in a

fire beyond the hours necessary to dress our food.

Each week Richard's irritability appeared to increase, his poverty likewise seemed to do so; with difficulty I now procured the smallest sum for food; our clothes were wearing out, but I could not renew them; our small stock of miserable furniture was at length parted with; one mattress, one chair, and a box, were all that remained, when I was brought to bed of a fine little girl! I had no attendance, but that of a fellow-lodger, nearly as destitute as myself, who, hearing my groans, came to my assistance; through her kindness my life was saved; she nursed me, and took care of my children, through a long illness; poor thing! her own life was fast wearing to a close, and I must always think her kindness to me hastened that event. I was, by the goodness of the Almighty, supported through my sufferings in an extraordinary manner. Although during this time I was exposed to the frequent curses of the man who had brought me to so miserable a state, I struggled through

this trying period, and, after a few weeks, was again able to attend to my family.

But I seemed an altered creature; my feelings were blunted; I heard with apathy my husband accuse me of being the cause of our want and wretchedness, by my refusal of Lord Shenstone's offer to provide for us all; I heard him say, 'Your boasted beauty is for ever gone; what would Lord Shenstone say, were he now to see your wan, skinny form, care-worn face, and rough red hands; who now would give a shilling to possess you?' I looked at my bony fingers, hard and cracked with labour, and I smiled, but mine was not a smile of mirth, it was that of a mind growing callous under such continual outrages; I even heard my husband bid me walk the streets, in pursuit of subsistence for myself and brats, and I replied by a laugh of scorn.

He was astonished at the change in his hitherto meek and patient, but sorrowing wife, and for a time seemed appalled. He gave me money, which enabled me to procure bread for my children; but I no longer wept over them tears of mingled joy and sorrow as

they devoured it—I no longer strove, in the midst of penury, to keep them clean and decent. I beheld their delicately fair skins stained with dirt—the hair, which had once formed glossy curls over their white foreheads, matted and dull—their garments hanging in tatters, and then I pointed them out to their father saying, 'Now are we all fit inhabitants for such a home.' He struck at me with violence, it was not the first time by many, but I was still weak from my confinement, and I fell, together with my infant, who was then in my arms.

How long I remained in that state I know not, it was broad day when I received the blow, which struck me to the ground, and when I opened my eyes it was quite dark. I heard my children crying around me—my recollection returned; I put out my hands for my infant, it was at my side, but cold as ice; in wild affright I screamed aloud, then started up, and though I tottered as I crossed the room, I had strength to strike a light, when, by the aid of a rushlight, I perceived that the same blow which felled me to

the ground, had deprived my hapless child of life; the place where I had fallen was deluged with blood—it was from my temple, which was cut by the only piece of furniture the room contained—the box, against which I had fallen. My baby appeared to have a slight bruise on one temple, otherwise there was no mark or appearance of injury. All that I had before known of misery was nothing until then. Yet my mind seemed in a more natural state than for some time preceding; I was again able to weep, and placing the murdered innocent upon the box I have mentioned, whilst I bound up my temple, I gave my other children bread to eat, and placed them on some straw to rest; then composing the limbs of the little creature, thus early removed from a world of trouble, I wept over and watched by it. Although I knew not by what means to procure a breakfast for my other children to eat, I grieved deeply at the untimely fate of this.

"My husband did not return, and as I was equally unable to bury my child as to know where to apply to Richard, my landlady undertook to inform the parish officers of its death;

hers was a house in which individuals requiring parish aid frequently resided, therefore the application caused no surprise. I was the sole mourner at the funeral of my child; with my bonnet drawn over my face, my sobs were unheeded, and I returned with trembling limbs to my home. I sold my wedding ring, all that remained to me of any value, for a few shillings; on this I resolved to subsist as long as possible, and when we could no longer do so, to apply to the parish for relief.

"From the time the dreadful event I have described took place I appeared to have been restored to my former state of feeling; my grief, though deep, was calm; I was again enabled to attend to my children; I attempted to mend their ragged dresses, I washed their soiled skins, and, what gave me greater consolation than any thing else, I prayed to Heaven for assistance and forgiveness. I yet retained a prayer-book and a bible, in which, until my last confinement, I had daily heard my boys read; I now again taught them, and in the midst of my sorrows, a feeling of comparative happiness reigned in my heart. I have since

thought that the profuse bleeding of my temple had relieved my brain from an oppression, which had caused that morbid and frightful state of feeling, which had led me to urge my husband's violent temper beyond its bearing.

"My last sixpence was expended, and I was debating in my own mind the necessity of sending to the overseers the following day, when Richard entered the room; he looked anxious and hurried, gave me half a crown, and telling me to procure food immediately, seated himself on the box—it was the same which had cut open my temple—the same on which my infant had been laid out. I shuddered as I beheld him there; then overwhelmed with emotion, rushing from the room, I fled into the street—I there recollected that my children wanted food, and returned in a few minutes from an eating-house, with meat for their father, and bread for ourselves—it was the first time they had tasted food during the day! The poor children were greedily devouring their bread, when the door, which was locked, was burst open, and officers of justice entering, seized Richard, and hurried

him to Newgate, where he remained but a few days before he was tried for a highway robbery, and sentenced to transportation for life! But few of those who saw in the daily papers that Richard Jones, alias Mercer, was found guilty of felony, suspected that, had all his names been made known, they would have recognised in him the late owner of one of the most celebrated private gaming-houses in the metropolis. Myself and children were removed to the workhouse, where we remained until Richard's sentence was passed. I was allowed to visit him in prison once only. Although love had long been utterly extinguished in my breast, yet I could not behold one, of whose preference I had once been so proud, reduced to the lowest state of degradation—himself a felon, and surrounded by felons—without feeling a pang so acute as must have broken any heart less accustomed to misery than mine. I wept bitter tears of grief—of forgiveness. I received in reply only sarcasms and curses—I beheld him apparently neither penitent nor ashamed; he again accused me of being the

cause of his present state, in not having suffered him to sell me in the days of my beauty. He refused every token of forgiveness or of kindness, and I quitted him with a heart seared by what I had seen and heard. My tears were checked—my blood ran coldly through my veins. I returned to the workhouse, almost deprived of sense and feeling. The following day, myself and my children were sent from London. I returned to this village, in which my family had lived respected—in which I had been supported and protected by you, during so many happy years of my life. I returned a pauper—nay, degraded far beyond that—the wife of a malefactor. I was no sooner seen than the finger of scorn was pointed at me—my brain, which was before inflamed, seemed on fire. I know not what crime I might not have committed, had not you beheld—pitied—consoled me.

"Oh, how sweet in the eye of Heaven must be the tear which virtue sheds over the unhappy and penitent! I erred greatly in continuing to love a man whose principles I had reason to doubt; in the folly of my heart, I thought his

love for me would work a reformation in him, were what you had heard of him true, which I fondly hoped it was not. The woman who weakly imagines her charms or her arguments can convert a profligate, will generally find, when too late, that she has encouraged a dangerous and erroneous hope—at least, I have found it so."

I did not hear all the minute circumstances I have related at one time, but all the most material incidents attending her melancholy story, she related on her first visit to me—the others I heard when in conversation at various periods. When Kitty had concluded her sorrowful narrative, I endeavoured to give her every comfort in my power, by encouraging her to look for consolation where alone it was to be found, and by praising her conduct in not having given way under circumstances of very extraordinary temptation, and leading her to look forward to future years of tranquillity and comfort.

"No, dear madam," she replied, in a tone of deep melancholy, "tranquillity and comfort are fled from me for ever—labour would be a relief

to me, but who will employ so degraded a being? The eye of suspicion will be ever watching my movements. Even as I go to the house of God, the finger of scorn will still point to the convict's wife; no one will enter into companionship with the offspring of a highwayman—no one will employ children descended from such a father. No, no—there is nothing for me to look forward to, but misery and woe."

"Do not talk thus despondingly," said I; "put your trust in Him who never forsakes the wretched, if not guilty. I will protect yourself and children; I will recollect, that though their father was worthless, their mother was amiable—that she was more sinned against than sinning: and I think you are well aware that those whom I respect and countenance, are not likely to meet with insult or unkindness in Southend."

"Heaven bless and reward you, dearest madam, for all your goodness to me and mine!" and as she spoke, the poor distressed creature sunk on her knees; her eyes were raised, and her lips moved as if in prayer for some moments: then rising, she said, "You have con-

quered, madam. I had determined to fly from this place with my children, and rather to beg my bread from door to door, and undergo every punishment the vagrant laws could inflict, than submit to the misery of remaining in my native place; but the mortifications I am here exposed to, will be amply repaid by your kind protection and countenance: and I hope, since I shall gladly undertake any labour to which my strength may be equal, that with your assistance, I may procure work, and be enabled to support my children without parish relief; then the scorn and derision of the world shall be as nothing to this, I fear still, too proud spirit."

That night it was necessary Mrs. Jones should remain at the poorhouse, but the following day I assured her I would endeavour to procure some other accommodation for herself and family. Ere she quitted me, I made a point of explaining some of the leading events in her history to my old housekeeper, who no longer looked coldly on the poor forlorn Kitty, but greeted her with a kindness which affected her

feelings quite as much as any thing which had occurred between her and myself. As my respectable old domestic accompanied her to the poorhouse, taking with her some provisions for the children, the neighbours viewed them with surprise. The following morning I drove in my little pony-carriage to Kilsby Grange, the residence of Mr. James Jones, who was living there in the enjoyment of every comfort that wealth could bestow. I found him at home, and soon perceived that he was aware his brother had been sentenced to transportation, but of the state of his wife and children he knew nothing. When I informed him that they were in the poorhouse at Southend, the colour mounted into his tanned cheeks, but it as quickly subsided, and he replied, "After Richard's misconduct, his family cannot be further disgraced—the poorhouse is the fittest home for his wife and children."

Seeing in him the rough, unpolished farmer (for whilst Richard had received the advantage of a liberal education, James had remained at Kilsby to assist his father in the superintend-

ence of his farm), and knowing that he had the character of being somewhat parsimonious, I had but little hope of gaining any assistance towards the maintenance of his sister-in-law and her children: however, I resolved that no effort in my power should be left untried to soften his heart. I therefore related her sad story—her sufferings—her passive obedience to all his brother's wishes, until he urged her to infamy—her positive resistance then, although she rejected wealth and luxury, and what was a still greater temptation, a separation from her tyrant, whilst she clung to want and misery. As I proceeded, I saw his rugged features evince traces of feeling, and ere I concluded, he stroked the back of his hand across his eyes, and exclaimed, "Say no more, madam—they shall not starve. I always liked poor Kitty, and but for my brother, should have told her so; but he persuaded me that she would not do for a farmer's wife—and then I found that he liked her, and so I said nothing to any body: but, after all, it would have been well for her if she had not been so taken with Richard's handsome face and flashy

talk. I will settle fifty pounds a year upon her, and if her children turn out well, I may do something for them, perhaps, by and by."

I thanked Mr. Jones most sincerely for his generous treatment of his sister-in-law, which, when I found that he had paid several large sums for his brother, I considered as really such. More than satisfied with the success of my self-created embassy, I returned to Southend, to impart to Mrs. Jones the glad tidings of her brother-in-law's assistance. As Mr. Jones sent his sister half a year's annuity in advance, a neat cottage, which was untenanted, was soon prepared for the reception of the family, I found that I had some useless furniture, which would be of great service.

My friends at Danby Park, who recollected the pretty Kitty Dawson, and were interested in her sad history, readily lent their aid towards establishing her comfortably, by sending her a cart-load of furniture for her bed-rooms; thus, in a few days from her arrival, I had the pleasure of seeing herself and children neatly dressed, and settled in their respectable little home.

Mrs. Jones devoted herself so entirely to the education and superintendence of her children, that she was rarely seen beyond her own small garden, except on a Sunday; and then, with a large bonnet, which shaded her face from every eye, she merely traversed the distance between the church and her own cottage. Strong as was the prejudice against her, when she first returned to her native place, her exemplary conduct, added to the notice and support of the rector's family and myself, soon caused her to be entirely re-established in the good opinion of her neighbours, who, in a few months after her return to Southend, began to vie with each other in paying her little marks of respect and attention.

I then proposed that she should commence a school, for the reception of such young persons as were, from their situation, above attending the national school, and whom their parents did not wish to send to any of the numerous seminaries, lest in learning what was there undertaken to be taught, they might likewise learn notions much beyond their station. Mrs. Jones readily acceded to my proposition, and she was

soon provided with a dozen pupils, whom she undertook to instruct in every thing that was necessary for a farmer's daughter to know, beyond the management of the house and dairy. In forwarding this I had a double motive; I perceived that Mrs. Jones's active mind required more employment, than that of instructing her own children only, to divert her thoughts from melancholy retrospections, and I had long wished for a school of the description I knew her to be fully capable of undertaking, since one or two of the farmers had sent their children from home, who had returned to them the most insufferable of beings, *vulgar fine ladies*; this I knew would not be the case with Mrs. Jones's pupils; she was so well-informed herself, that if they remained long with her, she would improve their minds and manners; but she would carefully avoid making them think too highly of their own attainments, or too lowly of those of their parents. My plan has, in every respect, answered my expectations. Several of the young farmers say that they are indebted to Mrs. Jones, for finding in their

wives, women who, after they have attended to their household duties, will sit down and make their own and children's clothes neatly, keep their husband's accounts, and when they come in, wearied with labour, will read to them the weekly paper, or on a Sunday, the bible, whilst some have carried their acquirements far beyond all this, and yet have remained modest and unaffected young women.

Two years after the return of Mrs. Jones to Southend, her brother-in-law married an amiable and respectable young person, who, having heard the story of her unfortunate marriage, has ever treated her with consideration and kindness; and when the young Richard attained the age of twelve, she proposed to her husband that his future home should be at Kilsby; not that he should lead a life of idleness, but that he might work in the farm, and learn to gain a livelihood for himself. He has now resided there three years, and I am assured by his uncle and aunt, that he proves all they can wish.

Should the reader of the foregoing narrative

ever pass through Southend, and his eye be attracted by a whitewashed cottage, with a window on each side the door, the walls nearly covered with china roses, the porch partially obscured by honeysuckle and clematis, the neat little garden, filled with gay flowers, which perfume the air around, whilst a beautiful girl of twelve or thirteen years of age, is busily employed in weeding, or in training some of the unruly flowers, and a sweet intelligent-looking, though lame boy, is seated at her side, endeavouring to aid her efforts; should he see all this, I recommend him then to open the little wicket, and proceed to the house, where, if he enter, he will observe on one side the passage a room, with forms, writing-desks, books, and slates, nicely arranged; on the opposite side, he will perceive a neatly-furnished parlour, in which, not merely a comely, but still lovely woman, is most probably seated, occupied in reading her bible; her dress of quaker-like simplicity, being of the plainest material, either black or gray, with a clear muslin handkerchief, cap, and apron, whose whiteness might

rival the driven snow, and her dark silken tresses braided across that fair forehead, on which sorrow has left deeper traces than time; no longer wretched, no longer repining, but grateful to Providence for blessings which she thinks far beyond her deserts, she nightly prays for the reformation of that being once so beloved, and for whose final doom she is alone fearful. Such will the reader now find

THE CONVICT'S WIFE.

END OF VOL. I.

WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.